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BEAUTIES

OF

ROBERT HALL.

“Mr. Hall, like Bishop Taylor, has the eloquence of an orator, the fancy of a poet, the acuteness of a schoolman, the profoundness of a philosopher, and the piety of a saint.”—*Dr. Parr.*

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NEW-YORK:

JOHN S. TAYLOR,

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THE perusal of the following volume will acquaint the reader with the most striking thoughts and beautiful expressions of one who was confessedly the most eloquent preacher and accomplished writer of the age. There is no hazard in the assertion, that a volume of the same size cannot be found, equally rich in profound thought and genuine eloquence.

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BEAUTIES

OF

ROBERT HALL.

IMPOLICY OF INTOLERANCE.

ALL violence exerted towards opinions which falls short of *extermination* serves no other purpose than to render them more known, and ultimately to increase the zeal and number of their abettors. Opinions that are false may be dissipated by the force of argument; when they are true their punishment draws towards them infallibly more of the public attention, and enables them to dwell with more lasting weight and pressure on the mind. The progress of reason is aided, in this case, by the passions, and finds in curiosity, compassion, and resentment, powerful auxiliaries.

When public discontents are allowed to vent themselves in reasoning and discourse, they subside into a calm; but their confinement in the bosom is apt to give them a fierce and deadly tincture. The reason of this is obvious: as

men are seldom disposed to complain till they at least imagine themselves injured, so there is no injury which they will remember so long, or resent so deeply, as that of being threatened into silence. This seems like adding triumph to oppression, and insult to injury. The apparent tranquillity which may ensue is delusive and ominous; it is that awful stillness which nature feels while she is awaiting the discharge of the gathered tempest.



SPLENDID ACTIONS.

THOUGH it is confessed great and splendid actions are not the ordinary employment of life, but must, from their nature, be reserved for high and eminent occasions; yet that system is essentially defective which leaves no room for their production. They are important, both from their immediate advantage and their remoter influence. They often save, and always illustrate the age and nation in which they appear. They raise the standard of morals; they arrest the progress of degeneracy; they diffuse a lustre over the path of life: monuments of the greatness of the human soul, they present to the world the august image of virtue in her sublimest form, from which streams of light and glory issue to remote times and ages; while their commemoration by the pen of historians and poets awakens in distant bosoms the sparks of kindred excellence.

Combine the frequent and familiar perpetration of atrocious deeds with the dearth of great and generous actions, and you have the exact picture of that condition of society

which completes the degradation of the species—the frightful contrast of dwarfish virtues and gigantic vices, where every thing good is mean and little, and every thing evil is rank and luxuriant: a dead and sickening uniformity prevails, broken only at intervals by volcanic eruptions of anarchy and crime.



UTILITY OF CONTROVERSY.

As the physical powers are scarcely ever exerted to their utmost extent but in the ardour of combat, so intellectual acumen has been displayed to the most advantage and to the most effect in the contests of argument. The mind of a controversialist, warmed and agitated, is turned to all quarters, and leaves none of its resources unemployed in the invention of arguments, tries every weapon, and explores the hidden recesses of a subject with an intense vigilance, and an ardour which it is next to impossible in a calmer state of mind to command. Disingenuous arts are often resorted to, personalities are mingled, and much irritating matter is introduced; but it is the business of the attentive observer to separate these from the question at issue, and to form an impartial judgment of the whole. In a word, it may be truly affirmed that the evils of controversy are transient, the good it produces is permanent.

REFORM.

[WRITTEN IN 1791.]

LET reform be considered as a chirurgical operation, if you please : but since the constitution must undergo it or die, it is best to submit before the remedy becomes as dangerous as the disease. The example drawn from a neighbouring kingdom as an argument for delay ought to teach us a contrary lesson. Had the encroachments of arbitrary power been steadily resisted, and remedies been applied as evils appeared, instead of piling them up as precedents, the disorders of government could never have arisen to that enormous height, nor would the people have been impelled to the dire necessity of building the whole fabric of political society afresh. It seems an infatuation in governments that in tranquil times they treat the people with contempt, and turn a deaf ear to their complaints ; till, public resentment kindling, they find when it is too late that in their eagerness to retain every thing they have lost all.



PROSPECTIVE INVASION BY BONAPARTE.

WHAT though he has carried the flames of war throughout Europe, and *gathered as a nest the riches of the nations, while none peeped, nor muttered, nor moved the wing* ; he has yet to try his fortune in another field ; he has yet to contend on a soil filled with the monuments of freedom, en-

riched with the blood of its defenders ; with a people who, animated with one soul, and inflamed with zeal for their laws and for their prince, are armed in defence of all that is dear or venerable, their wives, their parents, their children, the sanctuary of God, and the sepulchre of their fathers. We will not suppose there is one who will be deterred from exerting himself in such a cause by a pusillanimous regard to his safety, when he reflects that he has already lived too long who has survived the ruin of his country ; and that he who can enjoy life after such an event deserves not to have lived at all. It will suffice us, if our mortal existence, which is at most but a span, be co-extended with that of the nation which gave us birth. We will gladly quit the scene with all that is noble and august, innocent and holy ; and instead of wishing to survive the oppression of weakness, the violation of beauty, and the extinction of every thing on which the heart can repose, welcome the shades which will hide from our view such horrors.

* * * * *

While you have every thing to fear from the success of the enemy, you have every means of preventing that success, so that it is next to impossible for victory not to crown your exertions. The extent of your resources, under God, is equal to the justice of your cause. But should Providence determine otherwise, should you fall in this struggle, should the nation fall, you will have the satisfaction (the purest allotted to man) of having performed your part ; your names will be enrolled with the most illustrious dead, while posterity to the end of time, as often as they revolve the events of this period (and they will incessantly revolve

them), will turn to you a reverential eye, while they mourn over the freedom which is entombed in your sepulchre.



OFFICE SEEKERS.

THESE are a generation who measure their time not so much by the revolutions of the sun as by the revolutions of power. There are two eras particularly marked in their calender,—the one the period they are in the ministry, and the other when they are out,—which have a very different effect on their sentiments and reasoning. Their course commences in the character of friends to the people, whose grievances they display in all the colours of variegated diction. But the moment they step over the threshold of St. James's, they behold every thing in a new light; the taxes seem lessened, the people rise from their depression, the nation flourishes in peace and plenty, and every attempt at improvement is like heightening the beauties of Paradise or mending the air of Elysium.



MISERIES OF WAR.

BUT, to confine our attention to the number of the slain would give us a very inadequate idea of the ravages of the sword. The lot of those who perish instantaneously may be considered, apart from religious prospects, as compara-

tively happy, since they are exempt from those lingering diseases and slow torments to which others are liable. We cannot see an individual expire, though a stranger or an enemy, without being sensibly moved, and prompted by compassion to lend him every assistance in our power. Every trace of resentment vanishes in a moment: every other emotion gives way to pity and terror. In these last extremities we remember nothing but the respect and tenderness due to our common nature. What a scene then must a field of battle present, where thousands are left without assistance and without pity, with their wounds exposed to the piercing air, while the blood, freezing as it flows, binds them to the earth, amid the trampling of horses and the insults of an enraged foe! If they are spared by the humanity of the enemy and carried from the field, it is but a prolongation of torment. Conveyed in uneasy vehicles, often to a remote distance, through roads almost impassable, they are lodged in ill-prepared receptacles for the wounded and the sick, where the variety of distress baffles all the efforts of humanity and skill, and renders it impossible to give to each the attention he demands. Far from their native home, no tender assiduities of friendship, no well-known voice, no wife, or mother, or sister is near to soothe their sorrows, relieve their thirst, or close their eyes in death. Unhappy man! and must you be swept into the grave unnoticed and unnumbered, and no friendly tear be shed for your sufferings or mingled with your dust!

INFLUENCE OF EXAMPLE.

As the loss of virtue is the greatest loss a nation can sustain, so the expulsion of those who have been distinguished by possessing a superior degree of piety is an ill omen, an alarming advance towards a general corruption of morals. Men of true piety, in whatever communities they are found, "are the salt of the earth." Their example corroborates the sentiments of virtue, and preserves from degradation the standard of morals. Vice, naturally mean and cowardly, is abashed and confounded before the majesty of virtue. The efficacy of good examples in the formation of public opinion is incalculable. Though men justify their conduct by reasons, and sometimes bring the very rules of virtue to the touchstone of abstraction, yet they principally act from example. Metaphysical reasons have, in reality, had as little to do in the formation of the principles of morals, as rules of grammar in the original structure of language, or those of criticism in the formation of orators or poets.



HENRY MARTYN.

CROWNED with the highest honours a university could bestow, we see him quit the luxurious shades of academic bowers, for a tempestuous ocean and a burning clime,—for a life of peril and fatigue, from which he could expect

no other reward than the heroic pleasure of communicating to perishing millions the word of eternal life. He appears to have formed his religious character chiefly on the model of Brainerd; and as he equalled him in his patience, fortitude, humility, and love, so he strictly resembled him in his end. Both nearly at the same age fell victims to a series of intolerable privations and fatigues, voluntarily incurred in the course of their exertions for the propagation of the faith of Jesus. And though their death was not a violent one, the sacrifices they made and the sufferings they endured entitled them to the honours and rewards of a protracted martyrdom. Their memory will be cherished by the veneration of all succeeding ages; and he who reads their lives will be ready to exclaim, "*Here is the faith and patience of the saints.*"



FUTURE UNHAPPINESS OF THE COVETOUS.

HAPPY are they whose lives correspond to these benevolent intentions; who, looking beyond the transitory distinctions which prevail here, and will vanish at the first approach of eternity, honour God in his children, and Christ in his image. How much, on the contrary, are those to be pitied, in whatever sphere they move, who live to themselves, unmindful of the coming of their Lord. *When he shall come and shall not keep silence, when a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him, every thing, it is true, will combine to fill*

them with consternation; yet, methinks, neither the voice of the archangel, nor the trump of God, nor the dissolution of the elements, nor the face of the Judge itself, from which the heavens will flee away, will be so dismaying and terrible to these men as the sight of the poor members of Christ; whom, having spurned and neglected in the days of their humiliation, they will then behold with amazement united to their Lord, covered with his glory, and seated on his throne. How will they be astonished to see them surrounded with so much majesty! How will they cast down their eyes in their presence! How will they curse that gold which will then eat their flesh as with fire, and that avarice, that indolence, that voluptuousness which will entitle them to so much misery! You will then learn that the imitation of Christ is the only wisdom: you will then be convinced it is better to be endeared to the cottage than admired in the palace; when to have wiped the tears of the afflicted, and inherited the prayers of the widow and the fatherless, shall be found a richer patrimony than the favour of princes.



EFFECTS OF COERCION IN MATTERS OF RELIGION.

IT is worth while to consider what is likely to be the effect of enacting coercive laws in religion. If the men at whom they are aimed are conscientious, they will still persevere. They will reply to the injunction of silence what

the apostles did to the chief priest, "whether it be right to obey God or man, judge ye." They will still persist in their attempts to evangelize the poor. This will necessitate the exercise of greater severities, the failure of which will be considered as a demand for punishments still heavier, until the magistrate has proceeded to banishment, confiscation, and death. For it is the inconvenience attending persecution that it is necessarily progressive. Small punishments only irritate. It commences with an intention of suppressing error; baffled in its first attempt, and stung with disappointment, it soon loses sight of its original design; it soon degenerates into a settled resolution to subdue contumacy, and strike terror. It becomes a fearful struggle between power and fortitude; the power of inflicting suffering, and that of enduring, which shall wear the other out. Let those, then, who are advocates for coercive measures, not content themselves with contemplating those mild expedients which may first present themselves to their minds, but prepare for the consequences, and lay their accounts with being impelled to the exercise of the last severities. Let them expect to see dungeons crammed with prisoners, and scaffolds streaming with blood.



EXHORTATION TO EFFORT IN CIRCULATING THE BIBLE.

LET us then proceed with unabated ardour in this glorious career. Let us endeavour to give as wide an extension

as possible to the waters of life. Let them flow freely, in opposition to the narrow and mischievous policy which would confine them in artificial pools and reservoirs, where they become stagnant and putrid. Let us join our prayers with our efforts, that the word of God may have "free course and be glorified," whatever opposing force it may sweep away in its progress; and should his holiness the pope, while he is buffeting with the waves, and attempting to arrest the current, be thrown down, and his triple crown totter and tumble from his head, instead of feeling the smallest concern, let us rejoice and exult in the sure presage it will afford of the speedy arrival of that long-looked-for moment, when, at the decree of the Eternal, at the oath of the archangel, Babylon the Great shall sink like lead in the mighty waters.



EVILS OF POVERTY.

To descant on the evils of poverty might seem entirely unnecessary (for what with most is the great business of life, but to remove it to the greatest possible distance?) were it not, that besides its being the most common of all evils, there are circumstances peculiar to itself, which expose it to neglect. The seat of its sufferings are the appetites, not the passions; appetites which are common to all, and which, being capable of no peculiar combinations, confer no distinction. There are kinds of distress founded on the passions, which, if not applauded, are at least ad-

mired in their excess, as implying a peculiar refinement of sensibility in the mind of the sufferer. Embellished by taste, and wrought by the magic of genius into innumerable forms, they turn grief into a luxury, and draw from the eyes of millions delicious tears. But no muse ever ventured to adorn the distresses of poverty or the sorrows of hunger. Disgusting taste and delicacy, and presenting nothing pleasing to the imagination, they are mere misery in all its nakedness and deformity. Hence shame in the sufferer, contempt in the beholder, and an obscurity of station which frequently removes them from the view, are their inseparable portion. Nor can I reckon it on this account among the improvements of the present age, that by the multiplication of works of fiction the attention is diverted from scenes of real to those of imaginary distress; from the distress which demands relief to that which admits of embellishment: in consequence of which the understanding is enervated, the heart is corrupted, and those feelings which were designed to stimulate to active benevolence are employed in nourishing a sickly sensibility. To a most impure and whimsical writer,* whose very humanity is unnatural, we are considerably indebted for this innovation. Though it cannot be denied, that by diffusing a warmer colouring over the visions of fancy, sensibility is often a source of exquisite pleasures to others, if not to the posses-

* The author alludes to Sterne, the whole tendency of whose writings is to degrade human nature, by resolving all our passions into a mere animal instinct, and that of the grossest sort. It was perfectly natural for such a writer to employ his powers in panegyricizing an ass.

sor, yet it should never be confounded with benevolence; since it constitutes at best rather the ornament of a fine than the virtue of a good mind. A good man may have nothing of it, a bad man may have it in abundance.

Leaving therefore these amusements of the imagination to the vain and indolent, let us awake to nature and truth; and in a world from which we must so shortly be summoned, a world abounding with so many real scenes of heart-rending distress as well as of vice and impiety, employ all our powers in relieving the one and in correcting the other; that when we have arrived at the borders of eternity, we may not be tormented with the awful reflection of having lived in vain.



ENGLISH CRIMINAL CODE.

THE multiplicity of capital punishments we shall always consider as a reproach to the English nation; though, numerous as they are, they bear no proportion to what they would be, were the law permitted to take its course. The offences deemed capital by the common law are few; the sanguinary complexion of the criminal law, as it now stands, has arisen from the injudicious tampering of the legislature. To us it appears evident, that the *certainty* of punishment will restrain offenders more than its severity; and that when men are tempted to transgress, they do not weigh the emolument they had in view against the penalty awarded by law, but simply the probability of detection and

punishment against that of impunity. Let the punishments be moderate, and this will be the most effectual means of rendering them certain. While nothing can exceed the trial by jury, and the dignified impartiality with which justice is administered, we are compelled to look upon the criminal code with very different emotions, and earnestly to wish it were carefully revised, and made more humane, simple and precise.



DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MINISTERS AT HOME AND ABROAD.

MINISTERS of the gospel in this quarter of the globe resemble the commanders of an army stationed in a conquered country, whose inhabitants, overawed and subdued, yield a partial obedience; they have sufficient employment in attempting to conciliate the affections of the natives, and in carrying into execution the orders and regulations of their Prince; since there is much latent disaffection, though no open rebellion, a strong partiality to their former rulers, with few attempts to erect the standard of revolt.

In India, Satan maintains an almost undisputed empire, and the powers of darkness, secure of their dominion, riot and revel at their pleasure, sporting themselves with the misery of their vassals, whom they incessantly agitate with delusive hopes and fantastic terrors, leading them captive at their will, while few efforts have been made to despoil them of their usurped authority. Partial invasions have

been attempted and a few captives disenthralled; but the strength and sinews of empire remain entire, and that dense and palpable darkness which invests it has scarcely felt the impression of a few feeble and scattered rays. In India you will witness the predominance of a system which provides for the worship of gods many and of lords many, while it excludes the adoration of the Supreme Being, legitimates cruelty, polygamy, and lust, debases the standard of morals, oppresses with ceremonies those whom it deprives of instruction, and suggests no solid hope of happiness beyond the grave.



DEATH OF PRINCESS CHARLOTTE.

CRIMINAL as it is always not to mark the footsteps of Deity, the guilt of such neglect is greatly aggravated when he comes forth from his place to execute his judgments, and display his wrath; when he is pleased, as at present, to extinguish in an instant the hopes of a nation, to clothe the throne in sackcloth, and involve a kingdom in mourning. The greatness, the suddenness of this calamity, accompanied with circumstances of the most tender and affecting interest, speaks to the heart in accents which nothing but the utmost obduration can resist; so that were it the sole intention of Him who has inflicted it to awaken the careless and alarm the secure, among the higher orders especially, we are at a loss to perceive what could have been done more than has been accomplished. Whatever ima-

gination can combine in an example of the uncertainty of life, the frailty of youth, the evanescence of beauty, and the nothingness of worldly greatness, in its highest state of elevation, is exhibited in this awful event in its full dimensions.

* * * * *

There is no sorrow which imagination can picture, no sign of anguish which nature agonized and oppressed can exhibit, no accent of wo but what is already familiar to the ear of fallen, afflicted humanity; and the roll which Ezekiel beheld flying through the heavens, inscribed within and without *with sorrow, lamentation, and wo*, enters sooner or later into every house, and discharges its contents in every bosom. But in the private departments of life the distressing incidents which occur are confined to a narrow circle. The hope of an individual is crushed, the happiness of a family is destroyed; but the social system is unimpaired, and its movements experience no impediment and sustain no sensible injury. The arrow passes through the air, which soon closes upon it, and all is tranquil. But when the great lights and ornaments of the world, placed aloft to conduct its inferior movements, are extinguished, such an event resembles the Apocalyptic vial poured into that element which changes its whole temperature, and is the presage of fearful commotions, of thunders, lightnings, and tempests.

DESPOTISM.

IN the field of government, as in that of the world, *the tares of despotism were sown while men slept!* The necessity of regular government, under some form or other, is so pressing, that the evil of anarchy is of short duration. Rapid, violent, destructive in its course, it is an inundation which, fed by no constant spring, soon dries up and disappears. The misfortune on these occasions is, that the people, for want of understanding the principles of liberty, seldom reach the true source of their misery; but after committing a thousand barbarities, only change their masters, when they should change their system.



DEITY.

HUMAN excellence is blended with many imperfections, and seen under many limitations. It is beheld only in detached and separate portions, nor ever appears in any one character whole and entire. So that when, in imitation of the Stoics, we wish to form out of these fragments the notion of a perfectly wise and good man, we know it is a mere fiction of the mind, without any real being in whom it is imbodyed and realized. In the belief of a Deity, these conceptions are reduced to reality; the scattered rays of an ideal excellence are concentrated, and become the real attributes of that Being with whom we stand in the nearest

relation, who sits supreme at the head of the universe, is armed with infinite power, and pervades all nature with his presence.



DOCTRINE OF EXPEDIENCY IN MORALS.

How is it, that on a subject on which men have thought deeply from the moment they began to think, and where, consequently, whatever is entirely and fundamentally new must be fundamentally false; how is it, that in contempt of the experience of past ages, and of all precedents human and divine, we have ventured into a perilous path which no eye has explored, no foot has trod, and have undertaken, after the lapse of six thousand years, to *manufacture* a morality of our own, to decide by a cold calculation of interest, by a leger-book of profit and of loss, the preference of truth to falsehood, of piety to blasphemy, and of humanity and justice to treachery and blood?

In the science of morals we are taught by this system to consider nothing as yet done; we are invited to erect a fresh fabric on a fresh foundation. All the elements and sentiments which entered into the essence of virtue before are melted down and cast into a new mould. Instead of appealing to any internal principle, every thing is left to calculation and determined by expediency. In executing this plan the jurisdiction of conscience is abolished, her decisions are classed with those of a superannuated judge, and the determination of moral causes is adjourned from the

interior tribunal to the noisy forum of speculative debate. Every thing, without exception, is made an affair of calculation, under which are comprehended not merely the duties we owe to our fellow creatures, but even the love and adoration which the Supreme Being claims at our hands. His claims are set aside, or suffered to lie in abeyance until it can be determined how far they can be admitted on the principles of expediency, and in what respect they may interfere with the acquisition of temporal advantages. Even here nothing is yielded to the suggestions of conscience, nothing to the movements of the heart: all is dealt out with a sparing hand, under the stint and measure of calculation. Instead of being allowed to love God with all our heart and all our strength, the first and great commandment, the portion of love assigned him is weighed out with the utmost scrupulosity, and the supposed excess more severely censured than the real deficiency.

* * * * *

As this fashion of reducing every moral question to a calculation of expedience is a most important innovation, it would be strange if it had not produced a change in the manners of society. In fact, it has produced an entirely new cast of character, equally remote from the licentious gayety of high life and the low profligacy which falls under the lash of the law: a race of men distinguished by a calm and terrible ferocity, resembling Cæsar in this only, that, as it was said of him, they have come with sobriety to the ruin of their country. The greatest crimes no longer issue from the strongest passions, but from the coolest head. Vice

and impiety have made a new conquest, and have added the regions of speculation to their dominion. The patrons of impurity and licentiousness have put on the cloak of the philosopher : maxims the most licentious have found their way into books of pretended morality, and have been inculcated with the airs of a moral sage.* The new doctrine having withdrawn the attention from all internal sentiments as well as destroyed their authority, the distinction between right and wrong was easily lost sight of, the boundaries of vice and virtue confounded, and the whole substance of morals fell a prey to contending disputants. Nor is this the only or the worst consequence which has followed. A callous indifference to all moral distinctions is an almost inseparable effect of the familiar application of this theory. Virtue is no longer contemplated as the object of any particular *sentiment or feeling*, but solely with regard to its effects on society : it is what it *produces*, not what it *is*, that is alone considered, just as an accountant is indifferent to the *shape and appearance* of the figures, and attends simply to their amount. Crimes and virtues are equally *candidates* for approbation, nor must the heart betray the least preference, which would be to prejudge the cause ; but must maintain a sacred neutrality till expedience, whose hand never trembles in the midst of the greatest horrors, has weighed in her impartial balance their consequences and effects. In the mean time they are equally *candidates*, we

* The unholy speculations of Mr. Godwin were founded entirely on this basis.

repeat it again, for our approbation, and equally entitled to it, provided the passions can be deceived into an opinion, and this is not difficult, that they will come to the same thing at the foot of the account. Hence that intrepidity in guilt which has cased the hearts of the greatest adepts in this system as with triple brass. Its seeds were sown by some of these with an unsparing hand in France, a congenial soil, where they produced a thick vegetation. The consequences were soon felt. The fabric of society tottered to its base, the earth shook under their feet; the heavens were involved in darkness, and a voice more audible than thunder called upon them to desist. But, unmoved amid the uproar of elements, undismayed by that voice which astonishes nature and appals the guilty, these men continued absorbed in their calculations. Instead of revering the judgments, or confessing the finger of God, they only made more haste (still on the principle of expediency) to desolate his works and destroy his image, as if they were apprehensive the shades of a premature night might fall and cover their victims!

But it is time to conclude this discussion, which has, perhaps, already fatigued by its length. I cannot help expressing my apprehension, that this desecration of virtue, this incessant domination of physical over moral ideas, of ideas of expedience over those of right, having already dethroned religion, and displaced virtue from her ancient basis, will, if it is suffered to proceed, ere long shake the foundation of states and endanger the existence of the civilized world. Should it ever become popular, should it ever

descend from speculation into common life, and become the practical morality of the age, we may apply to such a period the awful words of Balaam:—*Who shall live when God doth this?* No imagination can portray, no mind can grasp its horrors; nor when the angel in the Apocalypse, to whom the keys are intrusted, shall be commissioned to open the bottomless pit, will it send forth a thicker cloud of pestilential vapour. If the apparent simplicity of this system be alleged in its favour, I would say, it is the simplicity of meanness, a simplicity which is its shame, a daylight which reveals its beggary. If an air of obscurity, on the contrary, is objected against that of better times, let it be remembered that every science has its *ultimate questions*, boundaries which cannot be passed; and that if these occur earlier in morals than in other inquiries, it is the natural result of the immensity of the subject, which, touching human nature in every point, and surrounding it on all sides, renders it difficult, or rather impossible, to trace it in all its relations, and view it in all its extent. Meanwhile, the shades which envelop, and will perhaps always envelop it in some measure, are not without their use, since they teach the two most important lessons we can learn,—the vanity of our reason, and the grandeur of our destiny.

CRUELTY OF INFIDELITY.

THE fearful catastrophes, the strange vicissitudes, the sudden revolutions of fortune, which, thinly scattered heretofore over a long tract of ages, poets and historians have collected and exhibited to the terror and the commiseration of mankind, have crowded upon us with so strange a rapidity, and thickened so fast, that they have become perfectly familiar, and are almost numbered among ordinary events. Astonishment has exhausted itself; and whatever occurs, we cease to be surprised. In short, every thing around us, in the course of a few years, is so changed, that, did not the stability of the material form a contrast to the fluctuations of the moral and political world, we might be tempted to suppose we had been removed to another state, or that all those things that have happened were but the illusions of fancy and the visions of the night. How consoling, at such a season, to look up to that Being *who is a very present help in trouble, the dwelling-place of all generations*; who changes all things, and is himself unchanged! And, independent of its impiety, how cruel is that philosophy which under pretence of superior illumination, by depriving us of this resource, would leave us exposed to the tossings of a tempestuous ocean, without compass, without solace, and without hope!

CHRISTIANITY.

IF ever Christianity appears in its power, it is when it erects its trophies on the tomb; when it takes up its votaries where the world leaves them, and fills the breast with immortal hope in dying moments.



CAUSES OF ACTION.

THE cool calculation of interest operates only at times; we are habitually borne forward in all parts of our career by specific affections and passions; some more simple and original, others complicated and acquired. In men of a vulgar cast, the grosser appetites,—in minds more elevated the passions of sympathy, taste, ambition, the pleasures of imagination,—are the springs of motion. The world triumphs over its votaries by approaching them on the side of their passions; and it does not so much deceive their reason as captivate their heart.



DR. PRIESTLEY.

THE religious tenets of Dr. Priestley appear to me erroneous in the extreme; but I should be sorry to suffer any difference of sentiment to diminish my sensibility to virtue

or my admiration of genius. From him the poisoned arrow will fall pointless. His enlightened and active mind, his unwearied assiduity, the extent of his researches, the light he has poured into almost every department of science, will be the admiration of that period when the greater part of those who have favoured, or those who have opposed him, will be alike forgotten. Distinguished merit will ever rise superior to oppression, and will draw lustre from reproach. The vapours which gather round the rising sun, and follow it in its course, seldom fail at the close of it to form a magnificent theatre for its reception, and to invest with variegated tints, and with a softened effulgence, the luminary which they cannot hide.



PRETENSIONS OF ROMANISM.

THE loftiest pretensions to universal empire, the prostration of Christendom at their feet, a plenary power of absolution, of opening the gates of purgatory and of paradise;—this gigantic dominion, extending to the living and the dead, founds itself entirely on a perverted interpretation of the Scriptures: and were they laid open to the people in their true intent and meaning, the whole fabric would melt and disappear like a cloud. When we remember this, we cease to be surprised at the extreme animosity which his holiness has evinced to the free circulation of the Scriptures. Their circulation is the sure presage of his destruction; and the roar of his bull (if I may be allowed a pun

on so serious a subject) is but the instinctive cry of a beast which feels itself goaded to madness by the operations of the Bible Society. To commit the custody of the Bible to men who have so deep and vital an interest in its suppression, would be to commit the lamb to the care of the wolf. No, my countrymen! the situation of his holiness possesses nothing in common with ours; and our feelings accord to our situations. He calls for darkness (and well he may), to prevent the detection of his errors; we, for light, to conduct us in the pursuit of truth. He courts the shade, to conceal his enormities; we ask for illumination, to enable us to perform our duties. The book which we are employed in circulating sufficiently solves the problem:—"He that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd: he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God."



BIOGRAPHY.

THE progress of a human being in his passage through time to eternity only requires to be exhibited with fidelity in order to become an interesting object to a contemplative mind; whatever may have been the moral or intellectual qualities of the individual, and however degraded by vice, or exalted by piety and virtue. Conquests achieved or objects attained,—conscience cowering under the tyranny of the passions, or asserting her dignity by subjecting them to her sway,—are equally instructive,—providing the rea-

der is informed by what steps virtuous or vicious habits were superinduced, by what stratagems temptation prevailed, or by what efforts and expedients it was repelled. The moral warfare which every rational and accountable creature has to sustain, pregnant with consequences which reach to eternity, possesses an intrinsic and essential importance, totally independent of the magnitude of the events, or the publicity and splendour of the scenes to which it is attached. The moral history of a beggar, which faithfully revealed the interior movements of his mind, and laid open the secret causes which contributed to form and determine his character, might enlarge and enlighten the views of a philosopher.



BURKE.

THE excursions of his genius are immense. His imperial fancy has laid all nature under tribute, and has collected riches from every scene of the creation and every walk of art. His eulogium on the Queen of France is a masterpiece of pathetic composition; so select are its images, so fraught with tenderness, and so rich with colours, "dipped in heaven," that he who can read it without rapture may have merit as a reasoner, but must resign all pretensions to taste and sensibility. His imagination is, in truth, only too prolific: a world of itself, where he dwells in the midst of chimerical alarms, is the dupe of his own enchantments, and starts, like Prospero, at the spectres of his own creation.

His intellectual views in general, however, are wide and variegated, rather than distinct ; and the light he has let in on the British constitution in particular resembles the coloured effulgence of a painted medium, a kind of mimic twilight, solemn and soothing to the senses, but better fitted for ornament than use.



BOAST OF INFIDELS.

It had been the constant boast of infidels, that their system, more liberal and generous than Christianity, needed but to be tried to produce an immense accession to human happiness ; and Christian nations, careless and supine, retaining little of religion but the profession, and disgusted with its restraints, lent a favourable ear to these pretensions. God permitted the trial to be made. In one country, and that the centre of Christendom, revelation underwent a total eclipse, while atheism, performing on a darkened theatre its strange and fearful tragedy, confounded the first elements of society, blended every age, rank, and sex in indiscriminate proscription and massacre, and convulsed all Europe to its centre ; that the imperishable memorial of these events might teach the last generations of mankind to consider religion as the pillar of society, the safeguard of nations, the parent of social order, which alone has power to curb the fury of the passions, and secure to every one his rights ; to the laborious the reward of their industry, to the rich the enjoyment of their wealth, to nobles the preservation of their honours, and to princes the stability of their thrones.

BIBLE SOCIETY.

I CONSIDER this society as a new moral power, which, combining the energies of Christendom in one great effort, promises to change the face of the universe; while, in imitation of Him in whose cause it is enlisted, it travels in the greatness of its strength "mighty to save." It possesses every characteristic of the work of God, in which the simplest means are made to produce the greatest effects; where there is the utmost economy in the contrivance, and the greatest splendour and magnificence in the design. The imbecility of man appears in the littleness of his ends, which he accomplishes, for the most part, by complicated and laborious operations. Omnipotence, on the contrary, places opulence in the end, and parsimony in the means. While our pride is mortified by perceiving how little we can effect by the greatest efforts, the Almighty touches a secret spring known only to himself, and impresses a single motion, which propagates itself in circles continually extending, till it reaches the extremity of the universe, and diffuses order and happiness through regions most remote from its origin, and most unconscious of its cause.



DISCRIMINATING PREACHING.

A LOOSE and indiscriminate manner of applying the promises and threatenings of the gospel is ill-judged and

pernicious ; it is not possible to conceive a more effectual method of depriving the sword of the Spirit of its edge, than adopting that lax generality of representation which leaves its hearer nothing to apply, presents no incentive to self-examination, and, besides its utter inefficiency, disgusts by the ignorance of human nature, or the disregard to its best interests, it infallibly betrays. Without descending to such a minute specification of circumstances as shall make our addresses personal, they ought unquestionably to be characteristic, that the conscience of the audience may feel the hand of the preacher searching it, and every individual know where to class himself. The preacher who aims at doing good will endeavour, above all things, to insulate his hearers, to place each of them apart, and render it impossible for him to escape by losing himself in the crowd. At the day of judgment, the attention excited by the surrounding scene, the strange aspect of nature, the dissolution of the elements, and the last trump will have no other effect than to cause the reflections of the sinner to return with a more overwhelming tide on his own character, his sentence, his unchanging destiny ; and amid the innumerable millions who surround him, he will *mourn apart*. It is thus the Christian minister should endeavour to prepare the tribunal of conscience, and turn the eyes of every one of his hearers on himself.

ENTHUSIASM.

SOME degree of enthusiasm, perhaps, generally accompanies religious impressions in uncultivated minds, at their commencement. Enthusiasm may be defined, that religious state of mind in which the imagination is unduly heated, and the passions outrun the understanding. But when persons are first deeply impressed with the infinitely momentous concerns of a future life, and are thereby introduced, as it were, into a new world, it is too much to expect their religious affections shall be perfectly regulated, or their conduct, under circumstances so novel, be consistent with the exactest rules of propriety. New situations, whether resulting from a moral and internal change, or from outward circumstances, make it necessary for some time to pass before those who are led into them know perfectly how to adjust their behaviour to them. But if the profession of piety be sincere (and of hypocrisy we are not at present speaking), it will eventually secure, together with the essential moral virtues, a regard to decorum and to all the minuter proprieties of social intercourse. In the meantime, where the love of God and man predominates, it will ill become the governor of a Christian country, and still less the governor of a Christian church, to suffer himself to be so much offended at the intemperate effusions of honest zeal as to disregard the substance of religion because it may be deficient in some of its more amiable appendages.

EVILS OF MOOTING CHRISTIANITY.

It is dangerous to familiarize every promiscuous audience to look upon religion as a thing which yet remains to be proved, to acquaint them with every sophism and cavil which a perverse and petulant ingenuity has found out, unaccompanied, as is too often the case, with a satisfactory answer ; thus leaving the poison to operate, without the antidote, in minds which ought to be strongly imbued with the principles and awed by the sanctions of the gospel. It is degrading to the dignity of a revelation established through a succession of ages by indubitable proofs, to be adverting every moment to the hypothesis of its being an imposture, and to be inviting every insolent sophist to wrangle with us, about the title, when we should be cultivating the possession. The practice we are now censuring is productive of another inconvenience. The argument of the truth of Christianity being an argument of accumulation, or, in other words, of that nature that the force of it results less from any separate consideration than from an almost infinite variety of circumstances, conspiring towards one point and terminating in one conclusion ; this concentration of evidence is broken to pieces when an attempt is made to present it in superficial descants ; than which nothing can be conceived better calculated to make what is great appear little, and what is ponderous, light.

EFFECTS OF EXTREME WANT.

A STARVING must not be expected to be a contented population, nor will any change be deprecated by those to whom existence itself has become a burthen. The instinctive feelings of nature will urge to some desperate effort, and they will cease to be restrained by legal coercion who already suffer more than the utmost rigour of the law can inflict. The heart that is withered with despair obtains an awful emancipation from the ordinary restraints of human action; and when a considerable portion of the people is reduced to that extremity, what is to be expected but that the physical energies which are found inadequate to the subsistence of their possessors by the exercise of honest industry will take an unnatural and destructive direction?



ENGLISH FREETHINKERS.

LORD HERBERT, the first and purest of our English freethinkers, who flourished in the beginning of the reign of Charles the first, did not so much impugn the doctrine or the morality of the Scriptures, as attempt to supersede their necessity, by endeavouring to show that the great principles of the unity of God, a moral government, and a future world, are taught with sufficient clearness by the light of nature. BOLINGBROKE, and some of his successors, advanced much farther, and attempted to invalidate the proofs of

the moral character of the Deity, and consequently all expectations of rewards and punishments; leaving the Supreme Being no other perfections than those which belong to a first cause, or almighty contriver. After him, at a considerable distance, followed HUME, the most subtle, if not the most philosophical, of the Deists; who, by perplexing the relations of cause and effect, boldly aimed to introduce a universal skepticism, and to pour a more than Egyptian darkness into the whole region of morals. Since his time skeptical writers have sprung up in abundance, and infidelity has allured multitudes to its standard: the young and superficial by its dexterous sophistry, the vain by the literary fame of its champions, and the profligate by the licentiousness of its principles. Atheism the most undisguised has at length begun to make its appearance.



EFFECTS OF INFIDELITY.

As the advantage of the armed over the unarmed is not seen till the moment of attack, so in that tranquil state of society in which law and order maintain their ascendancy, it is not perceived, perhaps not even suspected, to what an alarming degree the principles of modern infidelity leave us naked and defenceless. But let the state be convulsed, let the mounds of regular authority be once overflowed and the still small voice of law drowned in the tempest of popular fury events which recent experience shows to be possible), it will then be seen that atheism is a school of

ferocity; and that, having taught its disciples to consider mankind as little better than a nest of insects, they will be prepared in the fierce conflicts of party to trample upon them without pity, and extinguish them without remorse.



FOSTER.

MR. FOSTER'S name is probably new to most of our readers; but if we may judge from the production before us, he cannot long be concealed from the notice and applause of the literary world. In an age of mediocrity, when the writing of books has become almost a mechanical art, and a familiar acquaintance with the best models has diffused taste and diminished genius, it is impossible to peruse an author who displays so great original powers without a degree of surprise. We are ready to inquire by what peculiar felicity he was enabled to desert the trammels of custom, to break the spell by which others feel themselves bound, and to maintain a career so perfectly uncontrolled and independent. A cast of thought original and sublime, an unlimited command of imagery, a style varied, vigorous, and bold, are some of the distinguishing features of these very singular essays. We add with peculiar satisfaction, that they breath the spirit of piety and benevolence, and bear the most evident indications of a heart deeply attached to scriptural truths.

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The scale on which he thinks is so vast, and the excur-

sions of his imagination are so extended, that they frequently carry him into the most unbeaten track, and among objects where a ray of light glances in an angle only, without diffusing itself over the whole. On ordinary topics his conceptions are luminous in the highest degree. He places the idea which he wishes to present in such a flood of light, that it is not merely visible itself, but it seems to illumine all around it. He paints metaphysics, and has the happy art of arraying what in other hands would appear cold and comfortless abstractions, in the warmest colours of fancy. Without the least affectation of frivolous ornaments, without quitting his argument in pursuit of imagery, his imagination becomes the perfect handmaid of his reason, ready at every moment to spread her canvass and present her pencil. But what pleases us most, and affords us the highest satisfaction, is to find such talents enlisted on the side of true Christianity; nor can we help indulging a benevolent triumph at the accession of powers to the cause of evangelical piety, which its most distinguished opponents would be proud to possess.



FRIENDSHIP.

BUT though the cultivation of friendship, for the reasons already assigned, is not made the subject of precept, but is left to grow up of itself under the general culture of reason and religion, it is one of the fairest productions of the human soil, the cordial of life, the lenitive of our sorrows,

and the multiplier of our joys ; the source equally of animation and of repose. He who is destitute of this blessing, amid the greatest crowd and pressure of society, is doomed to solitude ; and however surrounded with flatterers and admirers, however armed with power, and rich in the endowments of nature and of fortune, has no resting place. The most elevated station in life affords no exemption from those agitations and disquietudes which can only be laid to rest on the bosom of a friend.

The sympathies even of virtuous minds, when not warmed by the breath of friendship, are too faint and cold to satisfy the social cravings of our nature ; their compassion is too much dissipated by the multiplicity of its objects and the varieties of distress to suffer it to flow long in one channel ; while the sentiments of congratulation are still more slight and superficial. A transient tear of pity, or a smile of complacency equally transient, is all we can usually bestow on the scenes of happiness or of misery which we meet with in the paths of life. But man naturally seeks for a closer union, a more permanent conjunction of interests, a more intense reciprocation of feeling ; he finds the want of one or more with whom he can trust the secrets of his heart, and relieve himself by imparting the interior joys and sorrows with which every human breast is fraught. He seeks, in short, another self, a kindred spirit whose interest in his welfare bears some proportion to his own, with whom he may lessen his cares by sympathy, and multiply his pleasures by participation.

The satisfaction derived from surveying the most beautiful scenes of nature or the most exquisite productions of

art is so far from being complete, that it almost turns into uneasiness when there is none with whom we can share it; nor would the most passionate admirer of eloquence or poetry consent to witness their most stupendous exertions upon the simple condition of not being permitted to reveal his emotions. So essential an ingredient in felicity is friendship apart from the more solid and permanent advantages it procures, and when viewed in no other light than as the organ of communication, the channel of feeling and of thought. But if joy itself is a burden which the heart can ill sustain without inviting others to partake of it, how much more the corrosions of anxiety, the perturbations of fear, and the dejection arising from sudden and overwhelming calamity?

But it is not merely as a source of pleasure or as a relief from pain that virtuous friendship is to be coveted; it is at least as much recommended by its utility. He who has made the acquisition of a judicious and sympathising friend may be said to have doubled his mental resources; by associating an equal, perhaps a superior mind with his own, he has provided the means of strengthening his reason, of perfecting his counsels, of discerning and correcting his errors. He can have recourse at all times to the judgment and assistance of one who, with the same power of discernment with himself, comes to the decision of a question with a mind neither harassed with the perplexities nor heated with the passions which so frequently obscure the perception of our true interests. Next to the immediate guidance of God by his Spirit, the counsel and encouragement of virtuous and enlightened friends afford the most

powerful aid in the encounter of temptation and in the career of duty.

Wisdom, indeed, is not confined to any limited circle, much less to the very narrow one of private friendship; and sound advice may often be procured from those with whom we have contracted no ties of intimacy. But the patient attention required to comprehend and encounter all the peculiarities of the case; the persevering ardour, the persuasive sympathy necessary to invest it with authority and to render it effectual, will be wanting; in the absence of which the wisest counsel is a wintry and sickly beam, which plays on the surface only: it may enlighten, but will seldom penetrate or melt. The consciousness, too, of possessing a share in the esteem and affection of persons of distinguished worth is a powerful support to every virtuous resolution; it sheds a warm and cheerful light over the paths of life; fortifies the breast against unmanly dejection and pusillanimous fears; while the apprehension of forfeiting these advantages presents a strong resistance to the encroachments of temptation. There are higher considerations, it is true, which ought invariably to produce the same effect; but we have no such superfluity of strength as should induce us to decline the aid of inferior motives, when all are but barely adequate to the exigencies of our state. The recollection that we are acting under the eye of Omniscience will lose nothing of its force by being joined to the remembrance, that our conduct is subject to the scrutiny of friends whose sentiments are in unison, whose influence coincides with the voice of

conscience and of God. And surely it must be no contemptible aid in the discharge of his duties which he derives who has invited the benevolent inspection of his actions, the honest reprehension of his errors, and the warm encouragement of his virtues; who, accustomed to lay open the interior of his character and the most retired secrets of his heart, finds in the approbation of his friend the suffrage of his conscience reflected and confirmed; who delighted, but not elated, by the esteem he has secured and the confidence he has won, advances with renovated vigour in the paths that lead to glory, honour, and immortality. The pleasures resulting from the mutual attachment of kindred spirits are by no means confined to the moments of personal intercourse; they diffuse their odours, though faintly, through the seasons of absence; refreshing and exhilarating the mind by the remembrance of the past and the anticipation of the future. It is a treasure possessed when it is not employed; a reserve of strength, ready to be called into action when most needed; a fountain of sweets, to which we may continually repair, whose waters are inexhaustible.

Friendship founded on the principles of worldly morality, recognized by virtuous heathens, such as that which subsisted between Atticus and Cicero, which the last of these illustrious men has rendered immortal, is fitted to survive through all the vicissitudes of life; but it belongs only to a union founded on religion, to continue through an endless duration. The former of these stood the shock of conflicting opinions, and of a revolution that shook the world; the latter is destined to survive when the heavens are no more, and to spring fresh from the ashes of the universe. The

former possessed all the stability which it is possible to sublunary things ; the latter partakes of the eternity of God. Friendship founded on worldly principles is *natural*, and though composed of the best elements of nature is not exempt from its mutability and frailty ; the latter is *spiritual*, and therefore unchanging and imperishable. The friendship which is founded on kindred tastes and congenial habits, apart from piety, is permitted by the benignity of Providence to embellish a world which, with all its magnificence and beauty, will shortly pass away ; that which has religion for its basis will ere long be transplanted in order to adorn the paradise of God.



FANATICISM.

FROM the very nature of fanaticism, it is an evil of short duration. As it implies an irregular movement or an inflamed state of the passions, when these return to their natural state it subsides. Nothing that is violent will last long. The vicissitudes of the world and the business of life are admirably adapted to abate the excesses of religious enthusiasm. In a state where there are such incessant calls to activity, where want presses, desire allures, and ambition inflames, there is little room to dread an excessive attention to the objects of an invisible futurity.

A few rare examples of this kind might perhaps be found by diligent inquiry, over which infidelity would triumph and piety drop a tear. It is not uncommon, however, to

find those who at the commencement of their religious course have betrayed symptoms of enthusiasm become in the issue the most amiable characters. With the increase of knowledge the intemperate ardour of their zeal has subsided into a steady faith and fervent charity, so as to exemplify the promise of Scripture, that "the path of the just" shall be "as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." As the energy of the religious principle is exerted in overcoming the world, so that variety of action and enlarged experience which the business of life supplies serves to correct its excesses and restrain its aberrations.



HOMER AND MILTON.

PERHAPS few authors have been distinguished by more similar features of character than Homer and Milton. That vastness of thought which fills the imagination, and that sensibility of spirit which renders every circumstance interesting, are the qualities of both: but Milton is the most sublime, and Homer the most picturesque. Homer lived in an early age, before knowledge was much advanced; he would derive little from any acquired abilities, and therefore may be styled the poet of nature. To this source perhaps we may trace the principal difference between Homer and Milton. The Grecian poet was left to the movements of his own mind, and to the full influence of that variety of passions which are common to all; his conceptions are

therefore distinguished by their simplicity and force. In Milton, who was skilled in almost every department of science, learning seems sometimes to have shaded the splendour of genius.

No epic poet excites emotions so fervid as Homer, or possesses so much fire; but in point of sublimity he cannot be compared to Milton. I rather think the Greek poet has been thought to excel in this quality more than he really does, for want of a proper conception of its effects. When the perusal of an author raises us above our usual tone of mind, we immediately ascribe those sensations to the sublime, without considering whether they light on the imagination or the feelings; whether they elevate the fancy or only fire the passions.

The sublime has for its object the imagination only, and its influence is not so much to occasion any fervour of feeling, as the calmness of fixed astonishment. If we consider the sublime as thus distinguished from every other quality, Milton will appear to possess it in an unrivalled degree; and here indeed lies the secret of his power. The perusal of Homer inspires us with an ardent sensibility; Milton with the stillness of surprise. The one fills and delights the mind with the confluence of various emotions; the other amazes with the vastness of his ideas. The movements of Milton's mind are steady and progressive: he carries the fancy through successive stages of elevation, and gradually increases the heat by adding fuel to the fire.

The flights of Homer are more sudden and transitory. Milton, whose mind was enlightened by science, appears the most comprehensive; he shows more acuteness in his

reflections, and more sublimity of thought. Homer, who lived more with men, and had perhaps a deeper tincture of the human passions, is by far the most vehement and picturesque. To the view of Milton the wide scenes of the universe seem to have been thrown open, which he regards with a cool and comprehensive survey, little agitated, and superior to these emotions which affect inferior mortals. Homer, when he rises the highest, goes not beyond the bounds of human nature; he still connects his descriptions with human passions, and though his ideas have less sublimity, they have more fire. The appetite for greatness—that appetite which always grasps at more than it can contain—is never so fully satisfied as in the perusal of “Paradise Lost.” In following Milton we grow familiar with new worlds, we traverse the immensities of space, wandering in amazement, and finding no bounds. Homer confines the mind to a narrower circle, but that circle he brings nearer to the eye; he fills it with a quicker succession of objects, and makes it the scene of more interesting action.



HEATHEN DEITIES.

FALSE and corrupt, however, as was the religion of the pagans (if it deserve the name), and defective, and often vicious, as was the character of their imaginary deities, it was still better for the world that the void should be filled with these than abandoned to a total skepticism; for if

both systems are equally false, they are not equally pernicious. When the fictions of heathenism consecrated the memory of its legislators and heroes, it invested them for the most part with those qualities which were in the greatest repute. They were supposed to possess in the highest degree the virtues in which it was most honourable to excel; and to be the witnesses, approvers, and patrons of those perfections in others by which their own character was chiefly distinguished. Men saw, or rather fancied they saw, in these supposed deities the qualities they most admired, dilated to a larger size, moving in a higher sphere, and associated with the power, dignity, and happiness of superior natures. With such ideal models before them, and conceiving themselves continually acting under the eye of such spectators and judges, they felt a real elevation; their eloquence became more impassioned, their patriotism inflamed, and their courage exalted.



BIBLE.

THE Bible is the treasure of the poor, the solace of the sick, and the support of the dying; and while other books may amuse and instruct in a leisure hour, it is the peculiar triumph of that book to create light in the midst of darkness, to alleviate the sorrow which admits of no other alleviation, to direct a beam of hope to the heart which no other topic of consolation can reach; while guilt, despair, and death vanish at the touch of its holy inspiration. There

is something in the spirit and diction of the Bible which is found peculiarly adapted to arrest the attention of the plainest and most uncultivated minds. The simple structure of its sentences, combined with a lofty spirit of poetry,—its familiar allusions to the scenes of nature, and the transactions of common life,—the delightful intermixture of narration with the doctrinal and preceptive parts,—and the profusion of miraculous facts, which convert it into a sort of enchanted ground,—its constant advertence to the Deity, whose perfections it renders almost visible and palpable,—unite in bestowing upon it an interest which attaches to no other performance, and which, after assiduous and repeated perusal, invests it with much of the charm of novelty : like the great orb of day, at which we are wont to gaze with unabated astonishment from infancy to old age. What other book besides the Bible could be heard in public assemblies from year to year, with an attention that never tires, and an interest that never cloy? With few exceptions, let a portion of the sacred volume be recited in a mixed multitude, and though it has been heard a thousand times, a universal stillness ensues, every eye is fixed, and every ear is awake and attentive. Select, if you can, any other composition, and let it be rendered equally familiar to the mind, and see whether it will produce this effect.

HUMILITY.

HUMILITY is the first fruit of religion. In the mouth of our Lord there is no maxim so frequent as the following : *Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* Religion, and that alone, teaches *absolute* humility ; by which I mean a sense of our absolute nothingness in the view of infinite greatness and excellence. That sense of inferiority which results from the comparison of men with each other is often an unwelcome sentiment forced upon the mind, which may rather embitter the temper than soften it : that which devotion impresses is soothing and delightful. The devout man loves to lie low at the footstool of his Creator, because it is then he attains the most lively perceptions of the divine excellence, and the most tranquil confidence in the divine favour. In so august a presence he sees all distinction lost, and all beings reduced to the same level. He looks at his superiors without envy, and his inferiors without contempt : and when from this elevation he descends to mix in society, the conviction of superiority which must in many instances be felt is a calm inference of the understanding, and no longer a busy, importunate passion of the heart.

IMPORTANCE OF CLOSENESS IN PREACHING.

THE conscience is not likely to be touched by general declamations on the evil of sin and the beauty of holiness without delineation of character: they may alarm at first, but after a while, if they be often asserted merely as general truths which involve the whole human race, they will supply no materials for self-examination or painful retrospect. They will in process of time be regarded as doctrinal points, and pass from the conscience into the creed. He must know little of human nature who perceives not the callousness of the human heart, and the perfect indifference with which it can contemplate the most alarming truths when they are presented in a general abstract form. It is not in this way that religious instruction can be made permanently interesting. It is when particular vices are displayed as they appear in real life, when the arts of self-deception are detected, and the vain excuses by which the sinner palliates his guilt, evades the conviction of conscience, and secures a delusive tranquillity—in a word, it is when the heart is forced to see in itself the original of what is described by the apostle, and, perceiving that “the secrets of his heart are made manifest, he falls down and confesses that God is among us of a truth.” The reproof which awakened David from his guilty slumber, and made him weep and tremble, turned, not on the general evil of sin, but on the peculiar circumstances of aggravation attending that which he had committed. The sermon of Peter on the day of Pentecost, which produced such decisive effects, was not a general

declamation on the evil of sin, but it contained a specific charge against his hearers of having rejected and crucified their Messiah. When Paul was called before Felix, being well acquainted with his character, he adapted his discourse accordingly, and “reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come,” until “Felix trembled.” The delineations of character and the injunctions of Scripture on practical points are not couched in general terms; they are diversified and particular; nor can it justly be doubted that the more of individuality, if I may be allowed the expression, our pictures of human nature possess, the more impressive will they become. It is in this department of public instruction there is a scope for endless variety—for the highest exertions of intellect, and the richest stores of knowledge.



MEN OF TASTE.

ON the whole, let it once for all be remembered, that men of taste form a very small part of the community, of no greater consequence in the eyes of their Creator than others; that the end of all religious discourse is the salvation of souls; and that to a mind which justly estimates the weight of eternal things, it will appear a greater honour to have converted a sinner from the error of his way, than to have wielded the thunder of a Demosthenes, or to have kindled the flame of a Cicero.

NECESSITY OF KNOWLEDGE AMONG THE LOWER CLASSES.

WE congratulate the nation on the extent of the efforts employed and the means set on foot for the improvement of the lower classes, and especially the children of the poor, in moral and religious knowledge, from which we hope much good will accrue, not only to the parties concerned but to the kingdom at large. These are the likeliest, or rather the only expedients that can be adopted for forming a sound and virtuous populace; and if there be any truth in the figure by which society is compared to a pyramid, it is on them its stability chiefly depends: the elaborate ornament at the top will be a wretched compensation for the want of solidity in the lower parts of the structure. These are not the times in which it is safe for a nation to repose on the lap of ignorance. If there ever were a season when public tranquillity was ensured by the absence of knowledge, that season is past. The convulsed state of the world will not permit unthinking stupidity to sleep without being appalled by phantoms and shaken by terrors to which reason, which defines her objects and limits her apprehensions by the reality of things, is a stranger. Every thing in the condition of mankind announces the approach of some great crisis, for which nothing can prepare us but the diffusion of knowledge, probity, and the fear of the Lord. While the world is impelled with such violence in opposite directions; while a spirit of giddiness and revolt is shed upon the nations, and the seeds of mutation are so thickly sown, the

improvement of the mass of the people will be our grand security; in the neglect of which, the politeness, the refinement, and the knowledge accumulated in the higher orders, weak and unprotected, will be exposed to imminent danger, and perish like a garland in the grasp of popular fury. *Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation; the fear of the Lord is his treasure.*



MODERN MISSIONARIES.

WE collect, with eager veneration, the names and achievements of the first heralds of the gospel; we dwell with exultation on the heroic fortitude they displayed in encountering the opposition of fierce barbarians, amid their efforts to reclaim them from a sanguinary superstition, and to imbue their minds with the principles of an enlightened piety. We look up to them as to a superior order of beings, and in the character of the instructors of mankind in the sublimest lessons, entitled to a distinction above all Greek, above all Roman fame; yet, with ineffable absurdity, and a most contemptible littleness of mind, if it please Providence at distant intervals to raise up a few congenial spirits, we are prepared to treat them with levity and scorn. It is the misfortune of some men to labour under an incapacity of discerning living worth;—a sort of moral virtuosi, who form their estimate of characters, as the antiquarian of coins, by the rust of antiquity.

NECESSITY OF HOLINESS TO A MINISTER.

ON the peculiar force with which the obligations of virtue attach to a Christian teacher, the purity and correctness of your own conduct, while it would imbolden me to speak with the greater freedom, make it less necessary for me to insist. You are aware that moral delinquency in *him* produces a sensation as when an armour-bearer fainteth; that he can neither stand nor fall by himself; and that it is impossible for him to deviate essentially from the path of rectitude without incurring the guilt and infamy of Jero-boam, who is never mentioned but to be stigmatized as he *who taught Israel to sin*. *Be thou an ensample to the flock in faith, in purity, in conversation, in doctrine, in charity*. Instead of satisfying ourselves in the acquisition of virtue with the attainments of a learner, we must aspire to the perfection of a master, and give to our conduct the correctness of a pattern. We are called to such a conquest over the world, and such an exhibition of the spirit of Christ, as shall not merely exempt us from censure, but excite to emulation. *Ye are the salt of the earth, ye are the light of the world*, said our Saviour to his disciples, whom he was about to send forth in the character of public teachers. As persons to whom the conduct of souls is committed, we cannot make a wrong step without endangering the interests of others; so that if we neglect to take our soundings and inspect our chart, ours is the misconduct of the pilot, who is denied the privilege of perishing alone. The immoral conduct of a Christian minister is little less than a public

triumph over the religion he inculcates : and when we recollect the frailty of our nature, the snares to which we are exposed, and the wiles of our adversary, who will proportion his efforts to the advantages resulting from his success, we must be aware how much the necessity of maintaining an exemplary conduct adds to the difficulty of the ministerial function.



NATURE OF THE GOSPEL.

A DOCTRINE, full, pure, perfect, to which nothing can be added without debasing its spirit, nothing taken away without impairing its proportions, is committed to our trust, to be retained and preserved just as we have received it, and delivered to our hearers in all its primitive simplicity. Like the works of nature, while it exhibits at first view an impress of its author, in the unequivocal character it bears of purity and majesty, it improves on a closer examination ; and the more deeply it is investigated the more the wisdom of the contrivance, in its exquisite adaptation to the state and condition of mankind, becomes conspicuous. As the discovery of a way of salvation for a fallen race, of the method by which a guilty and degenerate creature may recover the image and favour of his Maker, which we must ever remember is its most essential characteristic, what is wanting to its perfection ? what information or assurance beyond what it contains, calculated to awe, enlighten, convince, and encourage ? The facts it exhibits, supported

by clear and indubitable testimony, are more extraordinary than ever entered the mind of man in its widest excursions, combining all the sobriety of truth with more than the grandeur of fiction : and the doctrines connected with these facts, by the easiest and most natural inference, are of infinite moment. To a serious mind, the truths of the Christian religion appear with such an air of unaffected greatness, that in comparison of these all other speculations and reasonings seem like the amusements of childhood. When the Deity, the incarnation, the atonement, the resurrection of the Son of God, the sanctification of the church, and the prospects of glory have engaged our contemplation, we feel, in turning our attention to other objects, a strange descent, and perceive, with the certainty of demonstration, that as the earth is too narrow for the full development of these mysteries, they are destined by their consequences and effects to impregnate an eternal duration. We are not at all surprised at finding the ancient prophets searched into these mysteries with great but unsuccessful diligence, that the angels desire to look into them, or that the apostles were lost in the contemplation of those riches which they proclaimed and imparted. Are you desirous of fixing the attention of your hearers strongly on their everlasting concerns ? No peculiar refinement of thought, no subtlety of reasoning, much less the pompous exaggerations of secular eloquence are wanted for that purpose ; you have only to imbibe deeply the mind of Christ, to let his doctrine enlighten, his love inspire your heart, and your situation, in comparison of other speakers, will resemble that of the angel of the Apocalypse, who was seen standing in the sun.

NEW YEAR.

ANOTHER year is passed away, and you have entered upon a new portion of time. The division of time into distinct periods, besides its utility in business and in science, is favourable to moral reflection. On the entrance upon a new year, a contemplative mind will be naturally employed in estimating its acquisitions, comparing its improvements, retracing past occurrences, and revolving future prospects. The giddy and thoughtless feel their attention for a moment fixed, and, suspecting all is not right, form some indistinct resolution of repentance and amendment, which they are determined to execute as soon as some present scheme shall be finished, some prevailing passion gratified, or some expected change in their situation shall take place. The present moment seems always attended with insuperable difficulties; but they still flatter themselves with the hope of some more auspicious period, when their minds will be disengaged, their passions composed, and religion assert its power. Thus year rolls on after year, the self-delusion is repeated, and while they are planning new schemes of life they sink into the grave.

PROSPECTS OF THE PIOUS.

To that state all the pious on earth are tending ; and if there is a law from whose operation none are exempt, which irresistibly conveys their bodies to darkness and to dust, there is another not less certain or less powerful which conducts their spirits to the abodes of bliss, to the bosom of their Father and their God. The wheels of nature are not made to roll backward ; every thing presses on towards eternity ; from the birth of time an impetuous current has set in, which bears all the sons of men towards that interminable ocean. Meanwhile heaven is attracting to itself whatever is congenial to its nature, is enriching itself by the spoils of earth, and collecting within its capacious bosom whatever is pure, permanent, and divine, leaving nothing for the last fire to consume but the objects and the slaves of concupiscence ; while every thing which grace has prepared and beautified shall be gathered and selected from the ruins of the world to adorn that eternal city *which hath no need of the sun neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God doth enlighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* Let us obey the voice that calls us thither ; let us *seek the things that are above*, and no longer cleave to a world which must shortly perish, and which we must shortly quit, while we neglect to prepare for that in which we are invited to dwell for ever.

POPERY UNCHANGED.

WE persist in maintaining that the adherents to popery are materially changed, in contradiction to their express disavowal; and while they make a boast of the infallibility of their creed, and the unalterable nature of their religion, we persist in the belief of its having experienced we know not what melioration and improvement. In most instances when men are deceived, it is the effect of art and contrivance on the part of those who delude them: in this, the deception originates with ourselves; and instead of bearing *false* witness against our neighbour, such is the excess of our candour, that we refuse to credit the unfavourable testimony which he bears of himself.



PEACE OF THE CHRISTIAN.

WHEN we mention peace, however, we mean not the stupid security of a mind that refuses to reflect, we mean a tranquillity which rests upon an unshaken basis, which no anticipations, however remote, no power of reflection, however piercing or profound, no evolutions which time may disclose or eternity conceal, are capable of impairing; a peace which is founded on the oath and promise of Him who cannot lie; which, springing from the consciousness of an ineffable alliance with the Father of spirits, makes us to share in his fulness, to become a partner with him in

his eternity ; a repose, pure and serene as the unruffled wave, which reflects the heavens from its bosom, while it is accompanied with a feeling of exultation and triumph, natural to such as are conscious that ere long, having overcome, they shall possess all things.



QUESTIONS TO INFIDELS.

WE might ask the patrons of infidelity what fury impels them to attempt the subversion of Christianity ? Is it that they have discovered a better system ? To what virtues are their principles favourable ? Or is there one which Christians have not carried to a higher perfection than any of which their party can boast ? Have they discovered a more excellent rule of life, or a better hope in death, than that which the Scriptures suggest ? Above all, what are the pretensions on which they rest their claims to be the guides of mankind ; or which imbolden them to expect we should trample upon the experience of ages, and abandon a religion which has been attested by a train of miracles and prophecies, in which millions of our forefathers have found a refuge in every trouble, and consolation in the hour of death ; a religion which has been adorned with the highest sanctity of character and splendour of talents, which enrols among its disciples the names of BACON, NEWTON, and LOCKE, the glory of their species, and to which these illustrious men were proud to dedicate the last and best fruits of their immortal genius ?

If the question at issue is to be decided by argument, nothing can be added to the triumph of Christianity; if by an appeal to authority, what have our adversaries to oppose to these great names? Where are the infidels of such pure, uncontaminated morals, unshaken probity, and extended benevolence, that we should be in danger of being seduced into impiety by their example? Into what obscure recesses of misery, into what dungeons have their philanthropists penetrated, to lighten the fetters and relieve the sorrows of the helpless captive? What barbarous tribes have their apostles visited; what distant climes have they explored, encompassed with cold, nakedness, and want, to diffuse principles of virtue, and the blessings of civilization? Or will they rather choose to waive their pretensions to this extraordinary, and, in their eyes, eccentric species of benevolence (for infidels, we know, are sworn enemies to enthusiasm of every sort), and rest their character on their political exploits,—on their efforts to reanimate the virtue of a sinking state, to restrain licentiousness, to calm the tumult of popular fury, and by inculcating the spirit of justice, moderation, and pity for fallen greatness, to mitigate the inevitable horrors of revolution? our adversaries will at least have the discretion, if not the modesty, to recede from the test.

PROSPECTIVE NATURE OF MAN.

MAN is naturally a prospective creature, endowed not only with a capacity of comparing the present with the past, but also of anticipating the future, and dwelling with anxious rumination on scenes which are yet remote. He is capable of carrying his views, of attaching his anxieties to a period much more distant than that which measures the limits of his present existence; capable, we distinctly perceive, of plunging into the depths of future duration, of identifying himself with the sentiments and opinions of a distant age, and of enjoying, by anticipation, the fame of which he is aware he shall never be conscious and the praises he shall never hear. So strongly is he disposed to link his feelings with futurity, that shadows become realities when contemplated as subsisting there; and the phantom of posthumous celebrity, the faint image of his being impressed on future generations, is often preferred to the whole of his present existence, with all its warm and vivid realities. The complexion of the day that is passing over him is determined by the anticipations of the morrow: the present borrows its brightness and its gloom from the future, which, presenting itself to his contemplation as in a mirror, incessantly agitates him with apparitions of terror or delight. In the calculations of interest, the mind is affected in the same manner; it is perpetuity which stamps its value on whatever we possess, so that the lowest epicure would prefer a small accession to his property to the most exquisite repast; and none are found so careless of futurity as not to

prefer the inheritance he may bequeath to one of equal value the title to which expires with his life.



SUPERSTITION AND ENTHUSIASM.

ENTHUSIASM is an evil much less to be dreaded than superstition. The latter is a disease of opinion, which may be transmitted with fresh accumulation of error from age to age. It is the spirit of slumber in which whole nations are immersed. Placing religion, which is most foreign to its nature, in depending for acceptance with God on absurd penances or unmeaning ceremonies, it resigns the understanding to ignorance and the heart to insensibility. No generous sentiments, no active virtues ever issue from superstition.



SERIOUS INQUIRIES.

PERMIT us here to suggest two or three heads of inquiry. You have sometimes felt a peculiar seriousness of mind; the delusive glare of worldly objects has faded away, or become dim before your eyes, and death and eternity, appearing at the door, have filled the whole field of vision. Have you improved such seasons for fixing those maxims and establishing those practical conclusions which may produce an habitual sobriety of mind, when things appear

under a different aspect? You have sometimes found, instead of a reluctance to pray, a powerful persuasion to that exercise, so that you felt as if you could do nothing else. Have you always complied with these motions, and suffered nothing but the claims of absolute necessity to divert you from pouring out your hearts at the throne of grace? The Spirit is said to make intercession for saints with groanings which cannot be uttered. When you have felt those ineffable longings after God, have you indulged them to the utmost? Have you stretched every sail, launched forth into the deep of the divine perfections and promises, and possessed yourselves as much as possible of the fulness of God? There are moments when the conscience of a good man is more tender, has a nicer and more discriminating touch than usual; the evil of sin in general and of his own in particular appears in a more pure and piercing light. Have you availed yourselves of such seasons as these for searching into the chambers of imagery, and while you detected greater and greater abominations, been at pains to bring them out and slay them before the Lord? Have such visitations effected something towards the mortification of sin; or have they been suffered to expire in mere ineffectual resolutions?



PURSUIT OF SALVATION.

THE pursuit of salvation is the only enterprise in which no one fails from weakness, none from an invincible igno-

rance of futurity, none from the sudden vicissitudes of fortune, against which there exists no effectual security, none from those occasional eclipses of knowledge and fits of inadvertence to which the most acute and wakeful intellect is exposed. How suitable is it to the character of the Being who reveals himself by the name of *Love*, to render the object which is alone worthy of being aspired to with ardour the only one to which all may, without presumption, aspire; and while he conceals thrones and sceptres in the shadow of his hand, and bestows them where he pleases, with a mysterious and uncontrollable sovereignty, on opening the springs of eternal felicity, to proclaim to the utmost bounds of the earth, *Let him that is athirst come: and whomsoever will, let him partake of the water of life freely.*



VALUE OF SIMPLICITY IN PREACHING.

THE minister of the gospel is called to declare the testimony of God, which is always weakened by a profuse employment of the ornaments of secular eloquence. Those exquisite paintings and nice touches of art in which the sermons of the French preachers excel so much, excite a kind of attention, and produce a species of pleasure, not in perfect accordance with devotional feeling. The imagination is too much excited and employed, not to interfere with the more awful functions of conscience; the hearer is absorbed in admiration; and the exercise which ought to be

an instrument of conviction, becomes a feast of taste. In the hand of a Massillon, the subject of death itself is blended with so many associations of the most delicate kind, and calls up so many sentiments of natural tenderness, as to become a source of theatrical amusement, rather than of religious sensibility. Without being insensible to the charms of eloquence, it is our decided opinion that a sermon of Mr. Gisborne's is more calculated to "convert a sinner from the error of his way," than one of Massillon's. It is a strong objection to a studied attempt at oratory in the pulpit, that it usually induces a neglect of the peculiar doctrines of Christian verity, where the preacher feels himself restrained, and is under the necessity of explaining texts, of obviating objections, and elucidating difficulties, which limits the excursions of imagination, and confines it within narrow bounds. He is therefore eager to escape from these fetters; and, instead of "*reasoning out of the Scriptures,*" expatiates in the flowery fields of declamation.



PHILANTHROPIST AND WARRIOR.

WHILE the philanthropist is devising means to mitigate the evils and augment the happiness of the world, a fellow-worker together with God, in exploring and giving effect to the benevolent tendencies of nature, the warrior is revolving, in the gloomy recesses of his capacious mind, plans of future devastation and ruin. Prisons crowded with captives, cities emptied of their inhabitants, fields desolate and

waste, are among his proudest trophies. The fabric of his fame is cemented with tears and blood; and if his name is wafted to the ends of the earth, it is in the shrill cry of suffering humanity; in the curses and imprecations of those whom his sword has reduced to despair.



POPERY A FORM OF GODLINESS.

A HEAP of unmeaning ceremonies, adapted to fascinate the imagination and engage the senses,—implicit faith in human authority, combined with an utter neglect of Divine teaching,—ignorance the most profound, joined to dogmatism the most presumptuous,—a vigilant exclusion of biblical knowledge, together with a total extinction of free inquiry,—present the spectacle of religion lying in state, surrounded with the silent pomp of death. The very absurdities of such a religion render it less unacceptable to men whose decided hostility to truth inclines them to view with complacency whatever obscures its beauty or impedes its operation. Of all the corruptions of Christianity which have prevailed to any considerable extent, popery presents the most numerous points of contrast to the simple doctrines of the gospel; and just in proportion as it gains ground the religion of Christ must decline.

UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

IF we consult the Scriptures, we shall be at no loss to perceive that the unity of the church is not merely a doctrine most clearly revealed, but that its practical exemplification is one of the principal designs of the Christian dispensation. We are expressly told that our Saviour purposed by his death to “gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad;” and for the accomplishment of this design, he interceded, during his last moments, in language which instructs us to consider it as the grand means of the conversion of the world. His prophetic anticipations were not disappointed; for while a visible unanimity prevailed among his followers, his cause every where triumphed: the concentrated zeal, the ardent co-operation of a comparative few, impelled by one spirit, and directed to one object, were more than a match for hostile myriads. No sooner was the bond of unity broken, by the prevalence of intestine quarrels and dissensions, than the interests of truth languished; until Mahometanism in the east, and popery in the west, completed the work of deterioration, which the loss of primitive simplicity and love, combined with the spirit of intolerance, first commenced.

UNION AMONG CHRISTIANS.

THAT union among Christians which it is so desirable to recover must, we are persuaded, be the result of something more heavenly and divine than legal restraints or angry controversies. Unless an angel were to descend for that purpose, the spirit of division is a disease which will never be healed by troubling the waters. We must expect the cure from the increasing prevalence of religion, and from a copious communication of the Spirit to produce that event. A more extensive diffusion of piety among all sects and parties will be the best and only preparation for a cordial union. Christians will then be disposed to appreciate their differences more equitably; to turn their chief attention to points on which they agree; and, in consequence of loving each other more, to make every concession consistent with a good conscience. Instead of wishing to vanquish others, every one will be desirous of being vanquished by the truth. An awful fear of God and an exclusive desire of discovering his mind will hold a torch before them in their inquiries, which will strangely illuminate the path in which they are to tread. In the room of being repelled by mutual antipathy, they will be insensibly drawn nearer to each other by the ties of mutual attachment. A larger measure of the spirit of Christ would prevent them from converting every incidental variation into an impassible boundary; or from condemning the most innocent and laudable usages for fear of symbolizing with another class of Christians—an odious spirit, with which the writer under consideration is

strongly impregnated. The general prevalence of piety in different communities would inspire that mutual respect, that heartfelt homage for the virtues conspicuous in the character of their respective members which would urge us to ask with astonishment and regret, Why cannot we be one? What is it that obstructs our union? Instead of maintaining the barrier which separates us from each other, and employing ourselves in fortifying the frontiers of hostile communities, we should be anxiously devising the means of narrowing the grounds of dispute, by drawing the attention of all parties to those fundamental and catholic principles in which they concur.



PECULIAR SEASONS.

You are aware of what consequence it is in worldly concerns to embrace opportunities and to improve critical seasons; and thus, in the things of the Spirit, there are times peculiarly favourable, moments of happy visitation, where much more may be done towards the advancement of our spiritual interest than usual. These are gales of the Spirit, unexpected influences of light and of power, which no assiduity in the means of grace can command, but which it is a great point of wisdom to improve. If the husbandman is attentive to the vicissitudes of weather and the face of the sky, that he may be prepared to take the full benefit of every gleam of sunshine and every falling shower, how much more alert and attentive should we be in watch-

ing for those influences from above which are necessary to ripen and mature a far more precious crop! As the natural consequence of being long under the guidance of another is a quick perception of his meaning, so that we can meet his wishes before they are verbally expressed, something of this ready discernment, accompanied with instant compliance, may reasonably be expected from those who profess to be habitually led by the Spirit.



ANDREW FULLER.

I CANNOT refrain from expressing in a few words the sentiments of affectionate veneration with which I also regarded that excellent person while living, and cherish his memory now that he is no more; a man whose sagacity enabled him to penetrate to the depths of every subject he explored, whose conceptions were so powerful and luminous that what was recondite and original appeared familiar; what was intricate, easy and perspicuous in his hands; equally successful in enforcing the practical, in stating the theoretical, and discussing the polemical branches of theology; without the advantage of early education, he rose to high distinction among the religious writers of his day, and in the midst of a most active and laborious life, left monuments of his piety and genius which will survive to distant posterity. Were I making his eulogium I should necessarily dwell on the spotless integrity of his private life, his fidelity and friendship, his neglect of self-interest, his

ardent attachment to truth, and especially the series of unceasing labours and exertions in superintending the mission to India, to which he most probably fell a victim. He had nothing feeble or undecisive in his character, but to every undertaking in which he engaged he brought all the powers of his understanding, all the energies of his heart; and if he were less distinguished by the comprehension than the acumen and solidity of his thoughts; less eminent for the gentler graces than for stern integrity and native grandeur of mind, we have only to remember the necessary limitations of human excellence.



AUTHORITY OF NAMES.

DEFERENCE to great names is a sentiment which it would be base to attempt to eradicate, and impossible, were it attempted. But, like other offsprings of the mind, it is at first rude and ill-shapen. It makes no selection, no discrimination—it retains the impress of its original entire, just as it was made; it is a vague, undistinguished admiration, which consecrates in a mass all the errors and deformities along with the real excellencies of its object. Time only, the justest of all critics, gives it correctness and proportion, and converts what is at first merely the action of a great upon an inferior mind into an enlightened and impartial estimate of distinguished worth. The effect produced by coming into an intimate contact with a commanding intellect is of a mixed nature; it subdues and enslaves the

very persons whom it enlightens, and almost invariably leaves a portion of its sediment where it deposits its wealth. It must be placed at a certain distance before we derive from it all the pure defecated good it is capable of imparting; and with all my admiration of the inestimable men already mentioned, and my conviction of the value of their services, I am persuaded many years must elapse before we entirely surmount the effects of a long-continued dictatorship.



ST. JOHN.

THIS apostle presents a striking contrast to a certain class of writers, who, by no means deficient in talent, but possessing little sensibility, afford the reader little or no insight into their character. Their conceptions and their language are cast into a certain artificial mould, which leaves scarcely any traces of individuality. The writings of John are of the most contrary description; they are replete with traits of character; the writer presents his heart in almost every page. A tender sensibility pervades his gospel, sufficient to distinguish it from either of the preceding; nor is it possible to believe that the narrative of the resurrection of Lazarus, or of the last scenes of our Saviour's life, were composed without tears. Such strokes of pathos, such touching simplicity, such minuteness of detail, without puerility or redundancy, characterize the history of these extraordinary events, as could only have pro-

ceeded from one who felt himself a party concerned; who, with a most intimate acquaintance with his subject, wrote still more from his heart than from his head. He is little to be envied who can peruse these inimitable narratives without being moved: the author places us in the very midst of the scenes he describes; we listen to the discourses, we imbibe the sentiments of the principal actors; and while he says nothing of himself, he lays open the whole interior of his character. We feel ourselves introduced, not so much to the acquaintance of an inspired apostle as to that of the most amiable of men.

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After the resurrection and ascension, he continued to receive from his Saviour similar proofs of his preference. Preserved amid a violent and bloody persecution, he was permitted (such is the universal tradition of the church) to survive the rest of the apostles, to witness, in the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of its inhabitants, the fulfilment of his own predictions, and, finally, to close a life extended to an extreme old age in peace and in the bosom of his friends. Nor was this the only distinction he enjoyed. To him it was given to convey to the churches of Asia, among whom he dwelt, repeated messages from his ascended Lord, to behold his glory, and to catch the last accents of inspiration. To him it was given, not only to record the life of the Saviour in common with the other evangelists, but to transmit to future ages the principal events and vicissitudes which shall befall the church to the end of time, in a series of visions which revived the spirit

and manner, and more than equalled the sublimity of the ancient prophets. Endowed with a genius equally simple and sublime he mingles with ease among the worshippers before the throne, communes with beings of the highest order, and surveys the splendours of the celestial temple with an eye that never blenched. The place which he occupies in the order and succession of inspired men must at the same time ensure to him a high distinction; for while Moses leads the way, John brings up the rear of that illustrious company.



ATONEMENT OF CHRIST.

A COLD and skeptical philosophy may, I am aware, suggest specious cavils against the doctrines of revelation on this subject; cavils which derive all their force, not from the superior wisdom of their authors, but solely from the inadequacy of human reason to the full comprehension of heavenly mysteries. But still there is a simple grandeur in the fact, that God has *set forth his Son to be a propitiation*, sufficient to silence the impotent clamours of sophistry, and to carry to all serious and humble men a firm conviction that the law is exalted, and the justice of God illustriously vindicated and asserted by such an expedient. To minds of that description, the immaculate purity of the divine character, its abhorrence of sin, and its inflexible adherence to moral order will present themselves in the cross in a more impressive light than in any other object.

STUDY OF THE CLASSICS.

THIS, and much more than this, will be said : but when our Grecians have spent all their arrows, it will still remain an incontestable fact, that an enthusiastic admiration of the Iliad of Homer is but a bad preparation for relishing the beauties of the New Testament. What then is to be done ? Shall we abandon the classics, and devote ourselves solely to the perusal of modern writers, where the maxims inculcated and the principles taught are little, if at all, more in unison with those of Christianity ?—a fact which Mr. Foster, acknowledges and deploras. While things continue as they are, we are apprehensive, therefore, that we should gain nothing by neglecting the unrivalled productions of genius left us by the ancients, but a deterioration of taste, without any improvement in religion. The evil is not to be corrected by any partial innovation of this kind. Until a more Christian spirit pervades the world, we are inclined to think that the study of the classics is, on the whole, advantageous to public morals, by inspiring an elegance of sentiment and an elevation of soul which we should in vain seek for elsewhere.



ADAPTATION OF CHRISTIANITY.

WHEN we look at Christianity in the New Testament, we see a set of discoveries, promises, and precepts, adapted

to influence the whole character : it presents an object of incessant solicitude, in the pursuit of which new efforts are to be exerted and new victories accomplished, in a continued course of well-doing, till we reach the heavenly mansions. There is scarce a spring in the human frame and constitution it is not calculated to touch, nor any portion of human agency which is exempted from its control. Its resources are inexhaustible ; and the considerations by which it challenges attention embrace whatever is most awful or alluring in the whole range of possible existence. Instead of being allowed to repose on his past attainments, or to flatter himself with the hope of success without the exercise of diligence and watchfulness, the Christian is commanded to work out his salvation with fear and trembling. In the *actual* exhibition of religion the solicitude of serious minds has been made to turn too much on a particular crisis, which has been presented in a manner so insulated that nothing in the order of means seemed instrumental to its production. In short, things have been represented in such a manner as was too apt to produce despondency before conversion, and presumption after it.



SORROW.

SORROW is, indeed, the offspring of guilt, but the parent of wisdom. Stern in her aspect, and severe in her deportment, she is, however, sent on a message of mercy. She is destined to follow in the footsteps of intemperance, to

break her enchantments, to expose her delusions, and to deliver from thralldom such as are entangled in her snares, or are sleeping in her arms. Whoever surveys the course of his past life, with a view to remark the false steps he has taken in it, will find that as they have been preceded by indiscretion, they have been recalled by distress. To every object our attachment is proportioned to the pleasures we have received or expect to receive from it, and the passion will continue to be cherished as long as the recollection of it calls up ideas of pleasure rather than of pain. Now, every vicious pursuit is founded on indulgence, and disguised by inclination. To the licentious and abandoned, therefore, there is no prospect of the termination of their vices, till, by actual experience of the miseries they inflict, they convey to the mind more sentiments of aversion than of love.



SHORT DURATION OF INFIDELITY.

Its enormities will hasten its overthrow. It is impossible that a system which, by vilifying every virtue, and embracing the patronage of almost every vice and crime, wages war with all the order and civilization of the world; which equal to the establishment of nothing, is armed only with the energies of destruction, can long retain an ascendancy. It is in no shape formed for perpetuity. Sudden in its rise and impetuous in its progress; it resembles a mountain-torrent, which is loud, filthy, and desolating; but, being

fed by no perennial spring, is soon drained off and disappears. By permitting to a certain extent the prevalence of infidelity, Providence is preparing new triumphs for religion. In asserting its authority, the preachers of the gospel have hitherto found it necessary to weigh the prospects of immortality against the interests of time; to strip the world of its charms, to insist on the deceitfulness of pleasure, the unsatisfying nature of riches, the emptiness of grandeur, and the nothingness of a mere worldly life. Topics of this nature will always have their use; but it is not by such representations alone that the importance of religion is evinced. The prevalence of impiety has armed us with new weapons in its defence.



DIGNITY OF THE MINISTERIAL OFFICE.

LET me request you to consider the dignity and importance of the profession which you have assumed. I am aware that the bare mention of these, as attributes of the Christian ministry (especially when exercised among Protestant dissenters), may provoke a smile: we contend, however, that if the dignity of an employment is to be estimated, not by the glitter of external appearances, but by the magnitude and duration of the consequences involved in its success, the ministerial function is an high and honourable one. Though it is not permitted us to magnify ourselves, we may be allowed to magnify our office; and, indeed, the juster the apprehensions we entertain of what

belongs to it, the deeper the conviction we shall feel of our defects. Independently of every other consideration, that office cannot be mean which the Son of God condescended to sustain; for *the word which we preach first began to be spoken by the Lord*; and, while he sojourned upon earth, that Prince of life was chiefly employed in publishing his own religion. That office cannot be mean whose end is the recovery of man to his original purity and happiness—the illumination of the understanding—the communication of truth—and the production of principles which will bring forth fruit unto everlasting life. As the material part of the creation was formed for the sake of the immaterial; and of the latter the most momentous characteristic is its moral and accountable nature, or, in other words, its capacity of virtue and vice; that labour cannot want dignity which is exerted in improving man in his highest character, and fitting him for his eternal destination. Here alone is certainty and durability; for, however highly we may esteem the arts and sciences which polish our species and promote the welfare of society; whatever reverence we may feel, and ought to feel, for those laws and institutions whence it derives the security necessary for enabling it to enlarge its resources and develop its energies, we cannot forget that these are but the embellishments of a scene we must shortly quit—the decorations of a theatre, from which the eager spectators and applauded actors must soon retire. *The end of all things is at hand*. Vanity is inscribed on every earthly pursuit, on all sublunary labour; its materials, its instruments, and its objects will alike perish. An incurable taint of mortality has seized upon, and will consume them ere

long. The acquisitions derived from religion, the graces of a renovated mind, are alone permanent. This is the mystic enclosure, rescued from the empire of change and death; this is the field which the Lord has blessed: and this word of the kingdom, the seed which alone produces immortal fruit, the very bread of life, with which, under a higher economy, the Lamb in the midst of the throne will feed his flock and replenish his elect through eternal ages. How high and awful a function is that which proposes to establish in the soul an interior dominion—to illuminate its powers by a celestial light—and introduce it to an intimate, ineffable, and unchanging alliance with the Father of Spirits!



ST. PAUL.

IN St. Paul, for example, we behold the most heroic resolution, the most lofty superiority to all the modes of intimidation and danger, a spirit which rose with its difficulties and exulted in the midst of the most dismaying objects; yet when we look more narrowly into his character and investigate his motives, we perceive it was his attachment to mankind that inspired him with this intrepidity, and urged him to conflicts more painful and arduous than the votaries of glory have ever sustained. Who would have supposed it possible for the same breast to be the seat of so much energy and so much softness? that he who changed the face of the world by his preaching, and while a prisoner

made his judge tremble on the tribunal, could stoop to embrace a fugitive slave, and to employ the most exquisite address to effect his reconciliation with his master? The conversion of Onesimus afforded him a joy *like the joy of harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.* When the spiritual interests of mankind were concerned, no difficulties so formidable as to shake his resolution, no details so insignificant as to escape his notice. To the utmost inflexibility of principle he joined the gentlest condescension to human infirmity, *becoming all things to all men, that he might win some: to the Jews he became a Jew, that he might gain the Jews, to them that were without law, as without law,* adapting on all occasions his modes of address to the character and disposition of those with whom he conversed. It was the love of Christ and of souls that produced and harmonized those apparent discordances.



REWARD OF THE FAITHFUL MINISTER.

To have been himself the object of mercy, to have been the means of imparting it to others, and of dispensing the unsearchable riches of Christ, will produce a pleasure which can never be adequately felt or understood until we see him as he is. From that oneness of spirit, from that inseparable conjunction of interest, which will then be experienced in its utmost extent, will arise a capacity of sharing the triumph of the Redeemer and of participating in the delight with which he will survey his finished work, when a new

and fairer creation shall arise out of the ruins of the first. And is this the end; he will exclaim, of all my labours, my toils, and watchings, my expostulation with sinners, and my efforts to console the faithful! and is this the issue of that ministry under which I was often ready to sink! and this the glory of which I heard so much, understood so little, and announced to my hearers with lisping accents and a stammering tongue! well might it be styled the glory *to be revealed*. Auspicious day! on which I embarked in this undertaking, on which the love of Christ, with a sweet and sacred violence, impelled me to feed his sheep and to feed his lambs. With what emotion shall we, who, being intrusted with so holy a ministry, shall find mercy to be faithful, hear that voice from heaven, *Rejoice and be glad, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready!* With what rapture shall we recognise, amid an innumerable multitude, the seals of our ministry, the persons whom we have been the means of conducting to that glory!



RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENTS.

HAPPY had it been, however, had civil establishments of religion been *useless* only, instead of being productive of the greatest evils. But when Christianity is established by law, it is requisite to give the preference to some particular system; and as the magistrate is no better judge of religion than others, the chances are as great of his lending his

sanction to the false as to the true. Splendour and emolument must likewise be in some degree attached to the national church; which are a strong inducement to its ministers to defend it, be it ever so remote from the truth. Thus error becomes permanent, and that set of opinions which happens to prevail when the establishment is formed continues, in spite of superior light and improvement, to be handed down without alteration from age to age. Hence the disagreement between the public creed of the church and the private sentiments of its ministers; an evil growing out of the very nature of a hierarchy, and not likely to be remedied before it brings the clerical character into the utmost contempt. Hence the rapid spread of infidelity in various parts of Europe; a natural and never-failing consequence of the corrupt alliance between church and state. Wherever we turn our eyes, we shall perceive the depression of religion is in proportion to the elevation of the hierarchy. In France, where the establishment had attained the utmost splendour, piety had utterly decayed; in England, where the hierarchy is less splendid, more remains of the latter; and in Scotland, whose national church is one of the poorest in the world, a greater sense of religion appears among the inhabitants than in either of the former. It must likewise be plain to every observer that piety flourishes much more among dissenters than among the members of any establishment whatever. This progress of things is so natural, that nothing seems wanting in any country to render the thinking part of the people infidels but a splendid establishment. It will always ultimately debase the clerical character, and perpetuate, both in discipline and doctrine, every error and abuse.

REJECTION OF THE GOSPEL.

THE Scriptures ascribe the rejection of the gospel to one general principle: *the natural man receiveth not the things of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* The peculiar doctrines of Christianity are distinguished by a spirit irreconcilably at variance with that of the world. The deep repentance it enjoins strikes at the pride and levity of the human heart. The mystery of an incarnate and crucified Saviour must necessarily confound the reason and shock the prejudices of a mind which will admit nothing that it cannot perfectly reduce to the principles of philosophy. The whole tenor of the life of Christ, the objects he pursued, and the profound humiliation he exhibited, must convict of madness and folly the favourite pursuits of mankind. The virtues usually practised in society, and the models of excellence most admired there, are so remote from that holiness which is enjoined in the New Testament, that it is impossible for a taste which is formed on the one to perceive the charms of the other. The happiness which it proposes in a union with God and a participation of the image of Christ, is so far from being congenial to the inclinations of worldly men, that it can scarcely be mentioned without exciting their ridicule and scorn. General speculations on the Deity have much to amuse the mind and to gratify that appetite for the wonderful which thoughtful and speculative men are delighted to indulge. Religion, viewed in this light, appears more in the form of an exercise to the understanding than a law

to the heart. Here the soul expatiates at large, without feeling itself controlled or alarmed. But when evangelical truths are presented, they bring God so near, if we may be allowed the expression, and speak with so commanding a voice to the conscience, that they leave no alternative but that of submissive acquiescence or proud revolt.

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The repugnance of the human mind in its unenlightened state to the peculiarities of the Christian doctrine is such, that we have little hope of its yielding to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely. Till it is touched and humbled by grace, we are apprehensive that it will retain its aversion, and not suffer itself to be cheated into an approbation of the gospel by any artifice of words. Exhibit evangelical religion in what colours you will, the worldly-minded and the careless will shrink from the obtrusion of unwelcome ideas. Cowper has become, in spite of his religion, a popular poet, but his success has not been such as to make religion popular; nor have the gigantic genius and fame of Milton shielded from the ridicule and contempt of his admirers that system of religion which he beheld with awful adoration.



REV. THOMAS ROBINSON.

It is not necessary to recall to your recollection the talents of Mr. Robinson as a public instructor; you have most, if not all of you, witnessed his pulpit exertions on

that spot where he was accustomed to retain a listening throng hanging upon his lips, awed, penetrated, delighted, and instructed by his manly, unaffected eloquence. Who ever heard him without feeling a persuasion that it was the man of God who addressed him; or without being struck with the perspicuity of his statements, the solidity of his thoughts, and the rich unction of his spirit? It was the harp of David which, struck by his powerful hands, sent forth more than mortal sounds, and produced an impression far more deep and permanent than the thunder of Demosthenes or the splendid coruscations of Cicero.

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It was the boast of Augustus, that he found the city of Rome composed of brick, and left it marble. Mr. Robinson might say, without arrogance, that he had been the instrument of effecting a far more beneficial and momentous change. He came to this place while it was sunk in vice and irreligion; he left it eminently distinguished by sobriety of manners and the practice of warm, serious, and enlightened piety. He added not aqueducts and palaces, nor did he increase the splendour of its public edifices: but he embellished it with undecaying ornaments; he renovated the minds of the people, and turned a large portion of them "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." He embellished it with living stones, and replenished it with numerous temples of the Holy Ghost. He extended its intercourse with heaven, and prepared a numerous class of its inhabitants for the enjoyment of celestial bliss. Of the number of those who will devoutly acknowledge him as their spiritual father at the day of final audit, that day only can determine.

VANITY.

THERE is, it will be confessed, a delicate sensibility to character, a sober desire of reputation, a wish to possess the esteem of the wise and good, felt by the purest minds, which is at the farthest remove from arrogance or vanity. The humility of a noble mind scarcely dares to approve of itself, until it has secured the approbation of others. Very different is that restless desire of distinction, that passion for theatrical display, which inflames the heart and occupies the whole attention of vain men. This, of all the passions, is the most unsocial, avarice itself not excepted. The reason is plain. Property is a kind of good which may be more easily attained, and is capable of more minute subdivisions than fame. In the pursuit of wealth, men are led by an attention to their own interest to promote the welfare of each other; their advantages are reciprocal; the benefits which each is anxious to acquire for himself he reaps in the greatest abundance from the union and conjunction of society. The pursuits of vanity are quite contrary. The portion of time and attention mankind are willing to spare from their avocations and pleasures to devote to the admiration of each other is so small, that every successful adventurer is felt to have impaired the common stock. The success of one is the disappointment of multitudes. For though there be many rich, many virtuous, many wise men, fame must necessarily be the portion of but few. Hence every vain man, every man in whom vanity is the ruling passion, regarding his rival as his enemy, is strongly

tempted to rejoice in his misarrriage, and repine at his success.

Besides, as the passions are seldom seen in a simple, unmixed state, so vanity, when it succeeds, degenerates into arrogance ; when it is disappointed (and it is often disappointed), it is exasperated into malignity, and corrupted into envy. In this stage the vain man commences a determined misanthropist. He detests that excellence which he cannot reach. He detests his species, and longs to be revenged for the unpardonable injustice he has sustained in their insensibility to his merits. He lives upon the calamities of the world ; the vices and miseries of men are his element and his food. Virtues, talents, and genius are his natural enemies, which he persecutes with instinctive eagerness and unrelenting hostility. There are who doubt the existence of such a disposition ; but it certainly issues out of the dregs of disappointed vanity : a disease which taints and vitiates the whole character wherever it prevails. It forms the heart to such a profound indifference to the welfare of others, that, whatever appearances he may assume, or however wide the circle of his seeming virtues may extend, you will infallibly find the vain man is his own centre. Attentive only to himself, absorbed in the contemplation of his own perfections, instead of feeling tenderness for his fellow-creatures as members of the same family, as beings with whom he is appointed to act, to suffer, and to sympathize,—he considers life as a stage on which he is performing a part, and mankind in no other light than spectators. Whether he smiles or frowns, whether his path is adorned with the rays of beneficence,

or his steps are died in blood, an attention to self is the spring of every movement, and the motive to which every action is referred.

His apparent good qualities lose all their worth, by losing all that is simple, genuine, and natural: they are even pressed into the service of vanity, and become the means of enlarging its power. The truly good man is jealous over himself lest the notoriety of his best actions, by blending itself with their motive, should diminish their value; the vain man performs the same actions for the sake of that notoriety. The good man quietly discharges his duty, and shuns ostentation; the vain man considers every good deed lost that is not publicly displayed. The one is intent upon realities, the other upon semblances: the one aims to *be* virtuous, the other to *appear* so.

Nor is a mind inflated with vanity more disqualified for right action than just speculation, or better disposed to the pursuit of truth than the practice of virtue. To such a mind the simplicity of truth is disgusting. Careless of the improvement of mankind, and intent only upon astonishing with the appearance of novelty, the glare of paradox will be preferred to the light of truth; opinions will be embraced, not because they are just, but because they are new: the more flagitious, the more subversive of morals, the more alarming to the wise and good, the more welcome to men who estimate their literary powers by the mischief they produce, and who consider the anxiety and terror they impress as the measure of their renown. Truth is simple and uniform, while error may be infinitely varied: and as it is one thing to start paradoxes, and another to make dis-

coveries, we need the less wonder at the prodigious increase of modern philosophers.



USE OF SCRIPTURAL LANGUAGE.

To say nothing of the inimitable beauties of the Bible considered in a literary view, which are universally acknowledged, it is the book which every devout man is accustomed to consult as the oracle of God; it is the companion of his best moments, and the vehicle of his strongest consolations. Intimately associated in his mind with every thing dear and valuable, its diction more powerfully excites devotional feelings than any other; and when temperately and soberly used, imparts an unction to a religious discourse which nothing else can supply. Besides, is there not room to apprehend that a studied avoidance of the Scripture phraseology, and a care to express all that it is supposed to contain in the forms of classical diction, might ultimately lead to a neglect of the Scriptures themselves, and a habit of substituting flashy and superficial declamation, in the room of the saving truths of the gospel? Such an apprehension is but too much verified by the most celebrated sermons of the French; and still more by some modern compositions in our own language, which usurp that title. For devotional impression, we conceive that a very considerable tincture of the language of Scripture, or at least such a colouring as shall discover an intimate acquaintance with those inimitable models, will generally succeed best.

MODERN SERMONS.

MAY I be permitted to remark, though it seem a digression, that in the mode of conducting our public ministrations, we are, perhaps, too formal and mechanical; that in the distribution of the matter of our sermons we indulge too little variety, and, exposing our plan in all its parts, abate the edge of curiosity by enabling the hearer to anticipate what we intend to advance. Why should that force which surprise gives to every emotion derived from just and affecting sentiments be banished from the pulpit, when it is found of such moment in every other kind of public address? I cannot but imagine the first preachers of the gospel appeared before their audience with a more free and unfettered air than is consistent with the narrow trammels to which, in these latter ages, discourses from the pulpit are confined. The sublime emotions with which they were fraught would have rendered them impatient of such restrictions; nor could they suffer the impetuous stream of argument, exostulation, and pathos to be weakened, by diverting it into the artificial reservoirs prepared in the heads and particulars of a modern sermon. Method, we are aware, is an essential ingredient in every discourse designed for the instruction of mankind, but it ought never to force itself on the attention as an object apart; never appear to be an end, instead of an instrument; or beget a suspicion of the sentiments being introduced for the sake of the method, not the method for the sentiments. Let the experiment be tried on some of the best specimens of ancient

eloquence ; let an oration of Cicero or Demosthenes be stretched upon a Procrustes' bed of this sort, and, if I am not greatly mistaken, the flame and enthusiasm which have excited admiration in all ages will instantly evaporate ; yet no one perceives a want of method in these immortal compositions, nor can any thing be conceived more remote from incoherent rhapsody.



BENEFITS OF RETIREMENT.

HE must know little of the world, and still less of his own heart, who is not aware how difficult it is, amid the corrupting examples with which it abounds, to maintain the spirit of devotion unimpaired, or to preserve, in their due force and delicacy, those vivid moral impressions, that quick perception of good, and instinctive abhorrence of evil, which form the chief characteristic of a pure and elevated mind. These, like the morning dew, are easily brushed off in the collisions of worldly interest, or exhaled by the meridian sun. Hence the necessity of frequent intervals of retirement, when the mind may recover its scattered powers, and renew its strength by a devout application to the Fountain of all grace.

CAUSES OF RUIN.

MEN are ruined in their eternal interests by failing to look within; by being so absorbed in the pursuit of earthly good as to neglect the state of their hearts. But can this be supposed to be the case with us, who must never hope to discharge our office with effect without an intimate acquaintance with the inward man—without tracing the secret operations of nature and of grace—without closely inspecting the causes of revival, and of decay, in the spiritual life, and detecting the most secret springs and plausible artifices of temptation; in all which we shall be successful just in proportion to the degree of devout attention we bestow on the movements of our own minds.

Men are ruined in their eternal interests by living as though they were their own, and neglecting to realize the certainty of a future account. But it must surely require no small effort to divert our attention from this truth, who have not only the same interest in it with others, but, in consequence of the care of souls, possess a responsibility of a distinct and awful character; since not one of those to whom that care extends can fall short of salvation through our neglect or default, but *his blood will be required at our hands*. Where, in short, can we turn our eyes without meeting with incentives to piety. What part of the sacred function can we touch which will not remind us of the beauty of holiness, the evil of sin, and the emptiness of all sublunary good; or, where shall we not find ourselves in a temple resounding with awful voices, and filled with holy inspirations?

DISSENTERS.

THE religious opinions of dissenters are so various, that there is perhaps no point in which they are agreed, except in asserting the rights of conscience against all human control and authority. From the time of Queen Elizabeth, under whom they began to make their appearance, their views of religious liberty have gradually extended, commencing at first with a disapprobation of certain rites and ceremonies, the remains of papal superstition. Their total separation from the church did not take place for more than a century after; till despairing of seeing it erected on a comprehensive plan, and being moreover persecuted for their difference of sentiment, they were compelled at last reluctantly to withdraw. Having been thus directed by a train of events into the right path, they pushed their principles to their legitimate consequences, and began to discern the impropriety of all religious establishments whatever,—a sentiment in which they are now nearly united. On this very account, however, of all men they are least likely to disturb the peace of society; for they claim no other liberty than what they wish the whole human race to possess, that of deciding on every question where conscience is concerned. It is sufferance they plead for, not establishment; protection, not splendour. A disposition to impose their religion on others cannot be suspected in men whose distinguishing religious tenet is the disavowal of all human authority.

1791.

THERE are times when the moral world seems to stand still; there are others when it seems impelled towards its goal with an accelerated force. The present is a period more interesting perhaps than any which has been known in the whole flight of time. The scenes of Providence thicken upon us so fast, and are shifted with so strange a rapidity, as if the great drama of the world were drawing to a close. Events have taken place of late, and revolutions have been effected, which, had they been foretold a very few years ago, would have been viewed as visionary and extravagant; and their influence is yet far from being spent. Europe never presented such a spectacle before, and it is worthy of being contemplated with the profoundest attention by all its inhabitants. The empire of darkness and of despotism has been smitten with a stroke which has sounded through the universe. When we see whole kingdoms, after reposing for centuries on the lap of their rulers, start from their slumber, the dignity of man rising up from depression, and tyrants trembling on their thrones, who can remain entirely indifferent, or fail to turn his eye towards a theatre so august and extraordinary! These are a kind of throes and struggles of nature to which it would be a sullenness to refuse our sympathy. Old foundations are breaking up; new edifices are rearing. Institutions which have been long held in veneration as the most sublime refinements of human wisdom and policy, which age hath cemented and confirmed, which power hath supported,

which eloquence hath conspired to embellish, and opulence to enrich, are falling fast into decay. New prospects are opening on every side, of such amazing variety and extent as to stretch farther than the eye of the most enlightened observer can reach.



IDOLATRY.

IDOLATRY is not to be looked upon as a mere speculative error respecting the object of worship, of little or no practical efficacy. Its hold upon the mind of a fallen creature is most tenacious, its operation most extensive. It is a corrupt practical institution, involving a whole system of sentiments and manners which perfectly moulds and transforms its votaries. It modifies human nature in every aspect under which it can be contemplated, being intimately blended and incorporated with all its perceptions of good and evil, with all its infirmities, passions, and fears. In a country like India, where it has been established for ages, its ramifications are so extended as to come into contact with every mode and every incident of life. Scarce a day or an hour passes with a Hindoo, in which, by the abstinences it enjoins and the ceremonies it prescribes, he is not reminded of his religion. It meets him at every turn, presses like the atmosphere on all sides, and holds him by a thousand invisible chains. By incessantly admonishing him of something which he must do, or something which he must forbear, it becomes the strongest of his active

habits ; while the multiplicity of objects of worship, distinguished by an infinite variety in their character and exploits, is sufficient to fill the whole sphere of his imagination. In the indolent repose which his constitution and climate incline him to indulge, he suffers his fancy to wander without limit amid scenes of voluptuous enjoyment or objects of terror and dismay ; while revolving the history of his gods, he conceives himself absorbed in holy contemplations. There is not a vicious passion he can be disposed to cherish, not a crime he can be tempted to commit for which he may not find a sanction and an example in the legends of his gods.



FAITH.

It is a mysterious link in the chain of moral causes and effects which connects the weakness of the creature with the almightiness of God. *Be it unto thee*, said our Lord on a certain occasion, *be it unto thee according to thy faith*. Faith, considered as a mere speculative assent to the truth of a divine testimony, may be looked upon as uniform or stationary ; but when we consider it as a practical principle, as one of the graces of the Spirit, we perceive it to be, in common with others, susceptible of continual enlargement and increase. In the degree of power which future and invisible realities exert over the mind, in the practical energy of what men profess to believe, in the promptitude and certainty with which it determines them to a corres-

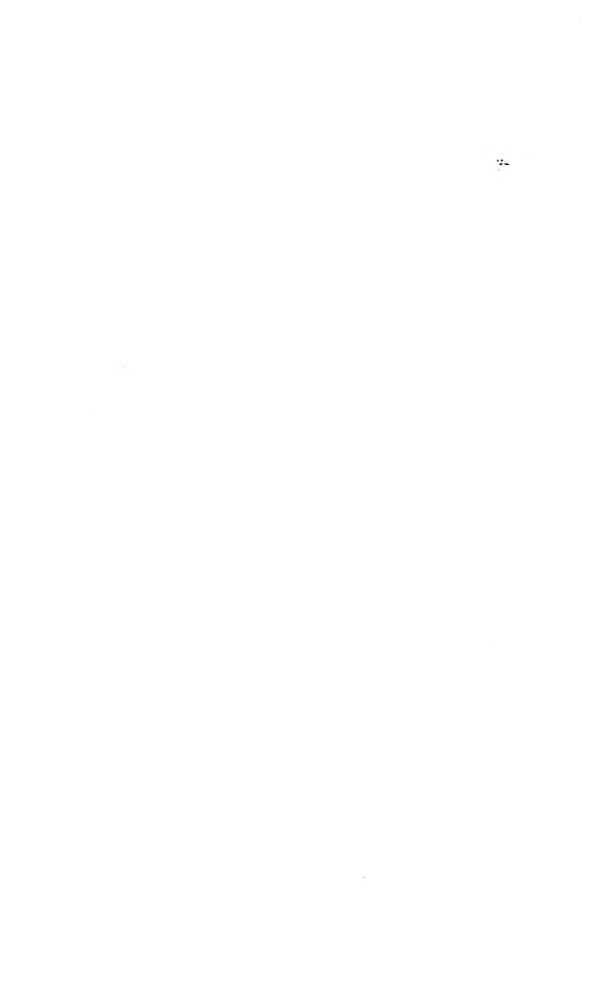
pendent conduct, there is the utmost diversity even among those who believe with the heart. The faith to which the Scriptures attach such momentous consequences, and ascribe such glorious exploits, is a practical habit, which, like every other, is strengthened and increased by continual exercise. It is nourished by meditation, by prayer, and the devout perusal of the Scriptures; and the light which it diffuses becomes stronger and clearer by an unintercepted converse with its object and a faithful compliance with its dictates; as on the contrary it is weakened and obscured by whatever wounds the conscience or impairs the purity and spirituality of the mind. This is the shield which will cover you from every assault; the chief part of that defensive armour which it behooves you to put on. Reposing on the word of Him with whom all things are possible, of Him who cannot lie; in the formidable bulwarks of idolatry, in the invincible rampart of prejudice and superstition which the great adversary of mankind has cast up to obstruct the progress of truth, you will see nothing to appal you: you will feel the battle not to be yours, but the Lord's, who, determined to subdue his enemies under his feet, condescends to employ you as an humble instrument of his victories; and, instead of sinking under the consciousness of weakness, you will glory in your infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon you.

INDICATION OF A FALLEN STATE.

THAT a creature formed for an endless duration should be disposed to turn his attention from that object, and to contract his views and prospects within a circle which, compared to eternity, is but a mathematical point, is truly astonishing ; and as it is impossible to account for it from the natural constitution of the mind, it must originate in some great *moral* cause. It shows that some strange catastrophe has befallen the species ; that some deep and radical malady is inherent in the moral system. Though philosophers of a certain description may attempt to explain and justify it on some ingenious hypothesis, yet, in spite of metaphysical subtleties, the alarming inquiry will still return—how is it that the disposition of mankind is so much at variance with their prospects ?—that no train of reflections is more unwelcome than that which is connected with their eternal home ? If the change is considered as a happy one,—if the final abode to which we are hastening is supposed to be an improvement on the present, why shrink back from it with aversion ? If it is contemplated as a state of suffering, it is natural to inquire what it is that has invested it with so dark and sombre a character. What is it which has enveloped that species of futurities in a gloom which pervades no other ? If the indisposition to realize a life to come arises in any measure from a vague presentiment that it will bring us, so to speak, into a closer contact with the Deity, by presenting clearer manifestations of his character and perfections, (and who can doubt that this is

a principal cause ?) the proof it affords of a great deterioration in our moral condition is complete. For who will suppose it possible a disposition to hide himself from his Creator should be an original part of the constitution of a reasonable creature ?—or what more portentous and unnatural, than for him that is formed to shun the presence of his Maker, and to place his felicity in the forgetfulness of Him *in whom he lives, and moves, and has his being?* If he is pained and disquieted whenever he is forcibly reminded of Him whose power sustains and whose bounty replenishes the universe with whatever is good and fair ; if the source of being and of happiness is the object of terror instead of confidence and love, it is not easy to conceive what can afford a stronger conviction of guilt, or a more certain presage of danger.

FINIS.







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